Religion and the Moral Life

A. CAMPBELL GARNETT

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RELIGION
and
THE MORAL LIFE

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To

MY WIFE

in appreciation of loyal cooperation
through the years

PREFACE

This book is a study of the relation between religious faith and the moral life. It agrees with both Catholic and Protestant theology that man's insight into the essential nature of his duty to his fellows is independent of his theological beliefs, but that his practical capacity to hold true to the highest ideals is vitally affected by the possession of a religious faith and by the quality of that faith. By an analysis of the psychology of the moral life the book shows, as against secularism, that man needs an object of religious devotion in his life. As against humanism, it finds that this need can be adequately filled only by a God who is both personal and suprahuman.

To show the need of such a God, however, is not enough. Faith does not grow as a wish fulfillment, nor in response to a simple recognition of one's need of it. Nor can it be induced merely by arguments attempting to prove the existence of God. The inquiry therefore turns to look for the roots of faith in the human soul and to consider the relations of faith and reason. The roots of faith are found to lie deeper than reason, though its branches may be trimmed by reason. In an analysis which depends both on the psychology of personality and the history of morals and religion, it is discovered that faith grows out of an experience which is both moral and mystical. Contrary to the Thomistic position, the order of generation is shown to be not faith, then hope, then love, but first love and hope, then faith. We see that man's love of his fellows precedes his love of God but tends to languish and fail without it. We come to understand how man experiences both the love and the condemnation of a God in whom he may not yet believe and through that experience may

respond with love and hope, and then with faith. We see, too, how man, by seeing the love of God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, is won to a faith in the God who first loved him.

Faith is thus seen to be a product of the moral life which both sustains it and is sustained by it. Its foundations are independent of reason, and in particular independent of metaphysics. But faith must live and grow as part of a total life, and its developments are therefore not beyond rational criticism. This inquiry into the relation of religion and the moral life therefore cannot escape the task of a negative critique. A psychological inquiry again shows how very simple is the faith man really needs, and in the light of this understanding it becomes possible to prune the lush growth of tradition which obscures and stifles the essential elements of faith, and then to single out to be cherished those historic facts and insights which have given the Christian form of faith its distinctive power.

From a critique of the form and content of faith the inquiry turns, finally, to an examination of the form and content of the moral life supported by this faith. An attempt is made to clarify the basic concepts of the Christian ethic and show their meaning for some of the major problems of our day, but the book concludes with an insistence that the social gospel, vital and valid as it is, can never be an adequate substitute for personal faith in the living God.

My thanks are due to the University of Wisconsin for a research grant in the summer of 1952 during which the greater part of the first six chapters was written. To my sister Alice I also express appreciation and thanks for the typing of the manuscript.

A. Campbell Garnett

Madison, Wisconsin
January, 1955

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RELIGION AND THE MORAL LIFE

Chapter 1

THE QUESTION AT ISSUE

Complex Relations of Religion and Morals

What is the relation of religion and morality? Is religion the essential basis of all true morality? Or is it an incubus on the moral life? These are violently contrary alternatives, but both are sincerely affirmed by earnest and intelligent men. In addition, there are many intermediate positions. For each position there are relevant considerations which can be advanced. Protagonists of religion point to the lofty ethical teaching embodied in every religious tradition, to the noble lives of religious teachers and founders of religious movements, to the pronouncements of great and good men concerning the influence of religion in their lives, to the reliance of humble folk on its inspiration and guidance in their troubles and difficulties, and to the leadership of the churches in the organization of institutions for charity and education at home and abroad. Opponents of religion point to its opposition to freedom of inquiry and the advancement of science, to its support of outworn and cruel laws, such as those for the suppression of witchcraft, to the dissemination of superstition, to the intolerance and hatred generated by religious divisions, to the tolerance of evils supposed to be in accord with the will of God, and to the false contentment induced by belief in compensations in the hereafter.

Obviously the question is complex. Both religion and morality are many-sided. The former, in particular, is a com-

posite of many strands, not all of which are essential and some of which are detrimental to those that are essential. No religionist could defend all that is comprised in the multitude of conflicting religious beliefs and practices. Few would attempt to defend all the beliefs and practices of their own sect and tradition. The defense of the believer against the charges of evils he cannot deny or justify is to attribute them to human frailty which departs from the letter or spirit of religion, or to say they are due to false and adventitious elements in the religion concerned. The pure essence of his own religion, he maintains, however elaborate it may be, is entirely good in its influence, or would be so if human beings understood it correctly and responded to it in the appropriate spirit.

The critic of traditional religion, however, will not concede this. Indeed, it is just at this point that he makes his attack. It is the central feature of all traditional religion, he maintains, that is the root of the trouble. It directs man to find his ultimate end, and the ultimate ground or authority for all his actions, in some principle or form of being beyond himself and beyond human society. The result of this, even at best, it is claimed, is a weakening of concern for the problems of man in this world and a rigidity of outlook upon human problems which fails to take full account of the relativity of every ethical question to a multitude of changing conditions and varying values. At its worst, this devotion to some transcendent form of being produces terrible evils. It justifies the condemnation of millions of innocent babes to the torments of hell for the greater glory of God. It requires the keeping of masses of mankind in ignorance and poverty to preserve the rigidity of arbitrarily conceived moral laws, such as those concerning caste and birth control. It endorses the tortures of the inquisition to

prevent the activity of free inquiry, lest it endanger the hope of the soul for eternal life.

The Central Feature of Religion

The analysis of religion contained in this indictment may be accepted by religionists. The central feature of all traditional religion certainly is the direction of attention to some principle or form of being beyond the self and human society which is accepted as ultimate ground or authority for decision of questions of human behavior, some form of being or principle supremely worthy of human devotion. In theism this object of devotion is a personal God; in polytheism it is a pantheon and hierarchy of anthropomorphic deities; in certain philosophical religions, such as Taoism, Buddhism, and the Vedanta of Sankara, it is an impersonal cosmic moral principle. There is no particular form of belief about this object of devotion that can be regarded as essential to religion, not even that vaguely described "recognition on the part of man of some higher unseen power as having control of his destiny" referred to in the definition of religion in the *Oxford Dictionary*. The object of devotion may be as visible as the disc of the sun, the Nile river, or the Roman emperor; it may be as impersonal as the "Substance" of Spinoza or the "mana" of a Melanesian tabu; its power may be absolute or as limited as that of an African fetish. The distinctive element in religion is not that of belief, but of attitude, the attitude of devotion to something other than the self. The antithesis of religion is devotion to self and to self alone. The absence of religion is the absence from a person's life of any significant attitude (or volitional tendency) subordinating all other interests of the self to some one object of interest (whether an existence or a principle, whether eternal or temporal) which is regarded as

worthy of such supremacy. Without the attitude of devotion no content of belief can constitute religion. It is aptly said "the devils also believe, and tremble." [1] But to hold any object as worthy of supreme devotion (worthy of the subordination to it of all other interests) is to make a "god" of it; it is to hold toward it a religious attitude.

Religion may therefore be broadly defined as an attitude of devotion to something other than the self which is regarded as worthy of supreme devotion. Traditional religions find their object of devotion not only beyond (or in something other than) the self, but also beyond society. By dropping the requirement that the object of religious devotion should be beyond society, however, we are able to recognize the genuinely and distinctively religious character of certain movements which cannot be classified as traditional religions and do not always claim to be religious, such as communism, fascism, and contemporary humanism. In these cases it is some form of human society that is held to be worthy of supreme devotion. And these earthly gods may call forth a devotion which, for lofty idealism and fanatical zeal, can match even the more remarkable examples produced by any of the traditional religions.

It may be objected that our definition is too broad. A man may regard his country, his profession, his wife, or some political or national leader as worthy of supreme devotion. This is true, but the point should be maintained that in such cases the devotion is religious though the religion is idolatrous. An idolatry is a religion in which the object adopted as worthy of supreme devotion does not merit exaltation into that position. To brand any religion as idolatrous is to pass an adverse value judgment on its conception of God, or upon the object of which it makes a god. To every religious person except a polytheist, every religion

[1] James 2:19.

is idolatrous which adopts a god which he cannot recognize as some form of representation of his own deity. To a democrat, communism and fascism are idolatrous. To a theist, humanism is also idolatrous. To a Humanist, every traditional theism is idolatrous, for it sets up a mythical object of devotion unworthy of such a place in the life of man. Humanists and theists may, and out of humility and politeness should, refrain from flinging the epithet of "idolater" at one another; but the fact remains that to hold any one object as supremely worthy of devotion is to hold every other object as more or less unworthy, and its worship therefore more or less idolatrous.

From another standpoint, it may be objected that our definition is too narrow; and for the purposes of the student of cultures this is probably true. It is more convenient for him to define religion in terms of beliefs and practices than of attitudes. An attitude of devotion is a phase of the subjective life of the individual that perhaps is too elusive to serve in the definition of his terms. In our attempt to understand the relation of religion and the moral life, however, the matter of subjective attitudes is of the utmost importance. What we are concerned to elucidate is, essentially and centrally, the place of the attitude of devotion to a god (an object regarded as sacred, or of supreme worth) among other human attitudes. For convenience and for clarity, we shall confine the term "religion" to this attitude and to beliefs and practices depending upon it in the life of the individual. In this sense the practices and beliefs of magic, mysticism, and supernaturalism are not necessarily religious. If their motivation contains no element of devotion of the self to something other than the self, they are not, whatever their protestations, genuinely religious. On the other hand, a genuinely religious attitude may repudiate all magic, mysticism, and supernaturalism; though a more dis-

cerning judgment may discover that there is involved in it an unrecognized element of the mystical.

Before passing from this analysis of what is essential to the nature of religion, we should guard against another misinterpretation and objection. To define religion as we have done does not mean that a person is not religious unless he consistently maintains at all times the attitude of devotion. No human attitude toward anything is consistently maintained at all times. The religious attitude, like any other, is held with different degrees of strength and consistency. An attitude is a volitional *tendency* involving certain beliefs and evaluations. But the motives springing from one attitude conflict with those from another, and the attitude of devotion to God is in constant conflict with motives from other attitudes and with a host of unorganized impulses.

Broad as our definition is, it does state the essential attributes of religion. In describing it as an attitude of devotion it takes account of the volitional and evaluative elements in religion as well as the cognitive; and it recognizes the potential power and all-absorbing character of religion. In saying that its object is regarded as supremely worthy of devotion it takes account of the claim to ultimate importance characteristic of religion. And in saying that the object of religious devotion must be other than the self it points to that which distinguishes the intensity of the religious life from those introverted intensities which can sometimes take a pseudoreligious form (in that appeal for aid is made to divine and semidivine beings) but which exclude and oppose those motives of self-sacrificing service which are most characteristic of religion at its best. Devotion to self is the antithesis of religion, the extreme which is capable of similiar intensities of opposite character even though utilizing similar means. In religion the self is directed outward to something held to be above and beyond it, even

though making itself felt within. And it is an attitude which tends to prepare the self gladly to lose itself in that which it regards as higher and worthier than itself.

The Critique of Traditional Religion

With this understanding of the essential nature of religion, we are able to clarify and appreciate the significance of the critique of traditional religion presented by its opponents. This critique comes primarily from a standpoint which may most accurately be described as that of secularism. This term is variously used, but its most essential idea would seem to be the refusal to recognize anything as sacred, i.e., as worthy of a supreme place in the system of values. We shall therefore use the term for the attitude which rejects all forms of religion, humanistic or traditional, by refusing to recognize that any object (ideal, or existent being, or principle) is worthy of the place of supreme importance given to an object of religious devotion.

The critique of traditional religion comes also from the standpoint of humanism. This term, too, is variously used. We shall use it, however, to designate a definitely religious attitude, but one finding its supremely worthy object of devotion in human society or in some principle or set of principles concerned with human society, such as the principles of democracy. Communism and fascism are thus types of humanism. Traditional religions find their supremely worthy object of devotion, not *in*, but *beyond* and *above* human society.

Both secularism and humanism assert that this essential feature of traditional religion exercises an influence which is bad. Any recognition that man's ultimate end, the ultimate ground or authority for his choice of values, lies in something beyond human society must, they say, even at its best,

weaken his concern for earthly human values and impose an undue rigidity upon his judgments of right and wrong; and in its historical and institutional forms devotion to such a superhuman object must create those vested interests, dogmatisms, and insensitivities which have led to the commission, in the name of religion, of so many crimes against the freedom and expansion of the human spirit.

Here, then, is the crux of the question. Is this charge true? Are these evils necessarily associated with devotion to a suprahuman object, even at its best? Or can that object of devotion—the God of traditional religion—be so understood that true devotion to Him will not only avoid the obvious errors and evils of historic religions, but also those subtler evils said to be inherent in such devotion even in its most enlightened and sensitive forms? On the other hand, can the enlightened forms of traditional religion develop a counterattack against the charges of secularist and Humanist, as well as the more obvious counterattack against communism and fascism? Can it be shown that man has need of an object of high devotion beyond any form of human society? Can human life and society be shown to suffer where such devotion is lacking? Can the faith in such an object of devotion be shown to be justifiable at the bar of human reason at its clearest, and human conscience at its best? If so, what must be the form of that suprahuman object of devotion which can fill this high function in human life and yet not injure, cramp, or misdirect the growth and aspirations of the human spirit? And by what process of reasoning can faith in such a God, or cosmic principle, be justified? These are the questions concerning religion, in its relation to morality, which take shape as a result of this initial analysis of the essential nature of religion.

The Questions of Ethics

Before proceeding further, however, it will be well to have clearly in mind the several different sorts of question which can be asked concerning morality. The central questions of ethics, or questions of *ethics proper*, are questions of what is right or wrong in matters of conduct. These divide into questions of *principle* and questions of *casuistry*. Questions of principle concern the framing of general rules for conduct, questions of the validity of moral codes and customs, of the value of laws and institutions. Questions of casuistry concern the right and wrong of particular cases, including questions of the limitations of and possible exceptions to the general rules.

Logically following these central questions come the *disciplinary* problems of education, training, and persuasion to enable the individual to know, and to induce him to do, what is right. These problems subdivide into those of the *intellectual* discipline required to develop the capacity of the individual to recognize distinctions of right and wrong, and those of the *practical* discipline required to develop in him a character which will respond to his judgment of right and wrong by cleaving to what he believes to be right. The intellectual problem, it should be noted, is much more complex than the learning of a set of moral rules. It includes the problems of applying the general rule to the particular case, of weighing the complex relations of means and ends, of critically examining traditional rules, and of forming independent judgments both as to the rules and as to their limitations and exceptions.

Logically prior to questions of ethics proper come certain distinctively *philosophical* problems. Most basic of these are the *semantic* problems of the meaning of ethical terms. The question of definition is not arbitrary or merely a mat-

ter of convenience. It concerns the referents in experience, or the linguistic functions, of ethical terms in ordinary language. There is certainly much confusion in the use of these terms, but it also appears that in the use of them actual communication takes place, that large numbers of people use them in the same way and understand each other's meaning through them. What then is thus communicated? Is it logical content or mere feeling or attitude? If the former, then can ethical terms all be defined in terms that refer to psychological, social, and material facts? Or is there something ultimately unique in the ethical which is not further analyzable, something logically simple and indefinable? These are the semantic problems of ethics discussed by philosophers. The former type of answer is called naturalistic, the latter, nonnaturalistic.

Closely related to these semantic problems are certain *epistemological* questions. How do we know the distinctions of good and bad, right and wrong? If ethical terms refer to phenomena constituted by psychological, social, and physical facts, then ethical questions must be decided by inductive procedures, resting ultimately on perception and introspective and reflective analysis of our experience of such facts. If, on the other hand, ethical terms refer to something unique, then this must be grasped by direct intuition, either of some general principle or of some particular quality or relation.

Following on the semantic and epistemological questions come problems of *ontology*, for the answers given to the first two types of question carry implications for the theory of being, the theory of the nature of reality, of existence, of what *is*. Nonnaturalistic and intuitional answers to the semantic and epistemological problems lend themselves readily to the more spiritual interpretations of the universe. Naturalistic and empirical answers, however, do not neces-

sarily exclude spiritualistic ontologies, though some such answers lend themselves more readily than others to the minimization or exclusion of the spiritual in the theory of being.

Ethical Theory and Religion

What, then, is the bearing of religion, as we have defined it, on these questions, and of these questions on religion? In particular, what is the relation of these questions to the choice between (a) traditional religion, with its devotion to an object beyond society, and (b) the humanistic types of religion (including fascism and communism as well as democratic humanism) with their object of devotion in some form of society, and (c) secularism, which recognizes no object as worthy of supreme devotion?

One point at least is clear. The semantic and epistemological questions of moral philosophy and the more fundamental questions of ethics proper are logically prior to the question of the adoption of an object of religious devotion. For the religious object is, by definition, an object held to be supremely worthy. Its adoption (the act of religious faith) therefore involves a moral judgment. We must have a fairly full and clear idea of what it is to be a moral being or to follow a moral principle before we can decide that any particular form of moral being or moral principle is supremely worthy of devotion. It is therefore a mistake to think that man's understanding of his duty requires a prior adoption of a belief in God or in some moral law of the universe. Critics of traditional religion sometimes assume that the traditionalist makes this mistake because he often proclaims ethical principles as supported by the authority of revelation. But the claim to revelation in matters of morals is understood by the traditionalist (if he represents

a clearly thought out tradition) as either reinforcing or specifically pointing out a duty which is knowable independently of revelation, or as adding to the general moral law some special duty, depending upon man's religious relationships. This, for example, is the significance of the Thomist doctrine of natural law and of Joseph Butler's theory of conscience.

The major and basic part of ethical knowledge must therefore be recognized as independent of any particular view of religion. So, too, will be the definitions of ethical terms and the solution of epistemological problems of ethics. For we cannot decide what "god," if any, we should serve until we have decided what, if anything, is supremely worthy of devotion. And we cannot make this decision except on the basis of the assumption of a body of ethical ideas. These accepted ideas form the basis for the semantic and epistemological inquiries as to what they mean, how we have obtained them, and how we may test their validity. These inquiries may lead to the revision of the accepted ideas, and this in turn to a revision of religious views. Thus we see that the religious views are logically dependent on the ethical ideas held, and on their semantic and epistemological implications and presuppositions, not vice versa. Either we have nothing at all that can be called ethical knowledge, or we have the major part of it independently of our views on religion.

The relation of our religious and ontological views to each other and to ethics proper is somewhat more interwoven. The acceptance or rejection of a belief in a traditional religious object is itself an element in an ontology. In so far, therefore, as the religious belief is logically determined by ethical ideas, ontology is dependent on ethics proper. And ontology, as we have already seen, is also logically affected by the solutions of the semantic and epis-

temological questions which stem from ethics proper. But ontology has other roots besides ethics. It is the theory of being, both physical and psychological and also logical. It has its roots, therefore, in every phase of experience. The idea of God, or of a moral law of the universe, or the rejection of such ideas, must therefore be integrated with ontological conceptions derived from other phases of experience; and such integration is apt to modify, enrich, or distort the ontological conceptions derived directly from ethical considerations.

In so far as nonethical ontological considerations play a part in shaping the idea of the religious object, this religious view may produce a reciprocal reaction in the ethical ideas primarily concerned with shaping that object and developing the religious attitude toward it. This reciprocal reaction is usually harmful, simply because it is a nonethical concept interfering with the form taken by ethical concepts as a result of reflection on distinctively ethical experience. One example of this is the influence on moral judgment of a theological determinism introduced into the idea of God by logical metaphysical and physical considerations. As a result of this determinism, God may be made responsible for many evils, which then have to be explained as introduced or allowed by Him as measures of discipline. From the resultant conceptions of a rigid and harsh divine discipline the believer then easily passes to the justification of a harshness in human discipline which his natural human sympathies would otherwise lead him to condemn. Another example, and one on the other side, is the influence of ontological views derived from the natural sciences upon the rejection or minimization of the spiritual element in ontology, leaving human progress to be interpreted as the result of the constant clash of blind, unfeeling forces. From this point the implications for ethics have been variously

worked out by Nietzsche, Marx, the Neo-Darwinians and others, but in each case in ways more or less destructive of the finer human qualities.

It must therefore be recognized that ontological ideas (whether in rejection of traditional religious concepts, or by their modification under the influence of ontological considerations from nonethical sources) can modify ethical ideas, and that their influence is usually harmful. Ethical ideas are logically independent of either the belief in God or in a moral law of the universe, or the rejection of such beliefs, and yet these ontological ideas can and do exercise this distorting influence upon them. This is not a reason for condemning the study of ontology, for we cannot think without some assumptions concerning the nature of being, and it is better that those assumptions should be critically examined. It does, however, suggest that we should apply very close critical examination to such ontological theories as are found to have ethical implications which may reasonably be judged to be evil. And this must be applied both to the ideas of God or an impersonal cosmic moral principle in traditional religious ontologies, and to ontologies which reject the traditional religious views.

In the case of a traditional religious ontology, however, it is ethical rather than nonethical considerations that have played the major part in shaping it. Its reciprocal influence on ethical ideas can only be harmful, therefore, if it has been influenced in some unpropitious way by nonethical ideas. The ontologies which reject traditional religious views, on the other hand, have usually been shaped chiefly by nonethical considerations. It is not surprising, therefore, that they tend to give little aid or comfort to the moral life. The ethical stand of the humanistic types of religion, or such ethical views as are held by secularists, are maintained by attention to human considerations despite the implica-

tions suggested by their ontology. This situation is very clearly shown in two notable essays, both of which are modern philosophical classics, the Romanes lecture of Thomas Henry Huxley on "Evolution and Ethics" and Bertrand Russell's almost equally famous essay on "A Free Man's Worship."

Thus far we have seen that there is a very decisive influence of ethical ideas on religious ideas, but comparatively little reverse influence of religious ideas on the shaping of ethical ideas, and what little there is is mostly harmful, by reason of nonethical elements involved in ontology. At the same time, we have seen that some ontology is inevitable and that an ontology which rejects traditional religious views, if shaped, as is usually the case, chiefly by nonethical considerations, is likely to be still more alien to the highest moral ideals. However, in spite of the fact that nonethical considerations inevitably enter into the shaping of an ontology, they need not necessarily shape it in ways inimical to the ethical outlook. This is true both of ontologies which accept and those which reject traditional religious concepts. The influence of an ontology upon ethical ideas therefore depends upon other features in the particular form of ontology and not merely on whether it contains or does not contain traditional religious concepts.

Religion and Moral Discipline

When we turn from the problems of ethics proper, and its logically prior or related philosophical questions, to the problems of ethical *discipline*, however, we find that the influence of religion, both in its traditional and nontraditional forms, looms large. Simply because religion is an attitude of *devotion* to some object other than the self, which is regarded as supremely worthy of devotion, its influence

may be enormous. It is measured only by the strength of the devotion. Its value, however, is another question. The secularist would say it is better to recognize no object as worthy of supreme devotion, to judge the changing worth of various objects from time to time and act accordingly. The religious attitude at its best, he says, makes for a certain narrowness and rigidity, and at its worst for all the evils of fanaticism. The Humanist would say that this is only true if the religious object is found beyond society, that to develop a devotion to some form of human society gives a necessary vigor and direction to the moral life with little or no tendency to undue narrowness or rigidity, still less to fanaticism. Both criticize the traditionalist as adopting an intellectually insupportable supernaturalism, and as subject to an ethically debilitating otherworldliness. The traditionalist rejects these charges. In counterattack he points to naziism and communism as indicating that fanaticism is also possible in devotion to a form of human society. He charges that, even in their wholesome forms, neither humanism nor secularism has an adequate goal and dynamic. In his own devotion, on the other hand, he believes he finds the only adequate answer to man's need of a moral discipline.

This is the issue, therefore, which we have to examine. The question is not one of the content of moral ideas or of the grounds for that content. It is one of the *motivation of ethical behavior*, the *discipline of the moral life*. And this discipline relates both to the intellectual activity of free and honest ethical inquiry and to the practical problems of the moral will. Our approach to the problem will be to inquire first how the moral life may function without a religious attitude, either traditional or humanistic. This is the standpoint of secularism.

Chapter 2

MORALITY WITHOUT RELIGION

Ethical Problems from the Secularist Viewpoint

If there is a satisfactory secularistic interpretation of the moral life it must do three things: (1) It must give an intellectually satisfactory interpretation of the moral experience of mankind without invoking or implying a superhuman moral being or cosmic moral principle which would constitute an object supremely worthy of devotion, such as is found in traditional religions. (2) It must, under similar limitations, formulate and win acceptance of a set of ethical ideas capable of supporting and guiding the development of a satisfactory social order. (3) Without creating or relying on a religious devotion, it must relate these ethical ideas to the sources of human motivation, so that they may draw out the appropriate moral response from those who accept the secularist point of view; i.e., it must show that a consistent adherence to the ethical ideas requisite for a satisfactory social order also constitutes a satisfactory way of life for the individual.

All three of these problems are difficult. The first involves the philosophical problems logically prior to ethics proper, the second is involved in the problems of ethics proper, and the third is the problem of moral discipline from the secularist point of view. It is, as we have seen, the solution to the third problem that is the chief point at issue

between secularist and religious points of view, but the problem of the satisfactory solution to this problem is not independent of the solutions to the first two; so we must consider what sorts of solution secularism may offer to those. We turn, therefore, to the central questions of ethics proper, as seen from the secularist viewpoint.

Logically, it might be thought that these questions should follow on the prior solution of the philosophical issues of semantics, epistemology, and ontology, but, in practice, it is impossible to work this way. The subject matter with which all ethical studies must begin is the actual body of moral judgments made by human beings, unsystematic and frequently inconsistent as they are. These judgments involve philosophical assumptions (semantic, epistemological, and ontological) which at first are confused and unformulated. The philosophical task is to render them explicit, examine their consistency, and work out their implications. This process also constitutes a critique of the judgments themselves, and may lead to the reformulation or abandonment of some of them as inconsistent with one another, or as having implications inconsistent with ethical experience. Always the court of last resort is ethical experience—the experience of value and obligation. The moral judgments express and formulate this experience. And though the expression and formulation of the experience react upon that experience to modify it, so that there is reciprocal interaction between ethical thinking and what we call our "feeling" [1] of value and obligation, yet there is a stubborn mass of this "feeling" which thinking cannot

[1] We use "feeling" here, in quotation marks, for lack of any better term. It is a broad term used for any form of immediate awareness. It must not be understood as suggesting that the "sense" (another vague and unsatisfactory term) of obligation and of value is purely emotional. The use of the term does not presuppose any particular semantic or epistemological theory concerning moral judgments.

change. Thus, ultimately, ethical thought must conform to what we cannot help but "feel" is right and good.

The question as to what constitutes a satisfactory set of moral judgments is therefore the question as to what set of moral judgments satisfactorily expresses what we "feel" is of value or is obligatory. These "feelings," and the consequent judgments, vary from person to person, but there must be a large common element of moral "feeling" among human beings or there could be no mutual understanding of moral ideas, no sharing of ideals, and no moral cooperation. Among civilized peoples the needs and disciplines of social organization have brought a large body of this vague "feeling" of value and obligation to explicit expression in the moral codes of the great religions, and these show a remarkable degree of unanimity on fundamental principles. Differences of opinion have been greater concerning the applications of moral judgments to institutions—political, economic, familial, and so forth—but even here agreement is growing. In spite of the tensions of the modern world, it was found possible to specify a very large area of agreement in the adoption of the Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations.

These facts of agreement, however, merely show that in their basic moral nature human beings are much the same. The fact of a consensus of opinion, however large, cannot prove to an individual that a certain moral judgment is right if he himself "feels" it is wrong. To every man his own intimate experience of value and obligation is the ultimate court of appeal. Discussion of a moral judgment only serves to clarify the facts of the situation concerned, including its consequences and its relevance to accepted ethical principles. When all the facts are in, the individual still forms his own judgment as an expression of his own intimate "feeling" for the values and obligations involved.

Ethics and the Social Order

However, although the individual must formulate his moral judgment as an expression of his own moral "feeling," this "feeling" is not the only check upon it. Indeed the "feeling" is itself subject to social influences and checks. Man cannot live apart from society, society cannot exist without a social order; a social order requires a general recognition and enforcement of a body of laws or customs; and these must be approved of as right by at least that section of society which wields the power to make and enforce laws. It is, of course, possible that a ruling class or group should make and enforce laws, in its own selfish interests, that it believes to be morally wrong. But it is not psychologically possible for any class or group to maintain for long a whole social order which its own moral conscience condemns. A group of amoral egoists would have no social cohesion. If a ruling class or group does things that are against its conscience, it must either rationalize and excuse them to the satisfaction of its conscience, or mend them, or its cohesion and power disintegrate.

Social order therefore requires the endorsement of the moral conscience, i.e., of the moral "feelings," of those who support it. No individual, therefore, can logically regard his moral ideas as satisfactory unless they would tend to support a social order which he would regard as satisfactory. To do that they must have the general support of those who maintain the social order. They must therefore be ideas which would tend to support a social order of a kind generally satisfactory to those who maintain it. Here then we have a basic criterion for a satisfactory system of ethics. No individual can logically feel satisfied with the system of ethical ideas endorsed by his own moral "feeling," or conscience, unless he can believe that the endorsement of those

ideas by those required to maintain the social order in which he participates would tend to shape and maintain that social order in ways satisfactory both to them and to him.

The criterion, however, is not yet quite adequate, for it only goes so far as to say that the social order supported by the ethical system must be satisfactory to the group required to maintain it. This may be a narrow ruling class or race, or a dominant and imperialist nation. Such a group may maintain indefinitely a social order satisfactory to itself but oppressive to others provided it maintains a system of ethical ideas and a discipline appropriate to the maintenance of its position. Is such a social order right or wrong? Is the system of ethical ideas that support it right or wrong? Is there any moral reason why those who have the power should not maintain the system they find satisfactory as long as they can do so with security? These questions our criterion does not answer, and the only place where an answer can be sought is in the moral "feelings" of the individual. The prior question which the moral "feelings," or conscience, must answer, therefore, is this: What sort of community do we find ethically satisfactory—an arbitrarily limited one, or one that rejects all arbitrary limits and distinctions in its concern for values and its concepts of obligation? This question each individual must answer for himself. It is only after he has answered it that he can apply to his ethical ideas a criticism based upon their application to the social order.

If this question is to be submitted to moral discussion the only basis to which such discussion can appeal, therefore, is to the actual elements of moral experience, or "feelings" of value and obligation, which are *common* to those participating. If people differ as to the sort of community they find ethically satisfactory, they can only go

back to some still more fundamental moral "feelings," such as are expressed in judgments concerning cases of violence, oppression, impartiality, mutual aid, and so forth. From agreements concerning these they can proceed to test judgments concerning the ethical satisfactoriness of different forms of community.

For the purposes of our further discussion we shall assume that this question is already answered in its broad outlines. We shall assume that the only sort of community which is really ethically satisfactory is a world community in which all people shall live at peace under governments of their own choosing, and those governments shall, so far as the means allow, assure to all people the opportunity to live a life of full and satisfying activity, with a minimum of interference and a maximum of mutual aid from each other, individually and collectively. This sort of community does not exist, but it is evidently the sort of community envisioned in the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights, which shows the very wide extent to which it appeals as satisfactory to the moral "feelings" of mankind. It can be taken, therefore, as the kind of community to which we need to refer when the criterion of "fitting the social order" is applied in the criticism of moral judgments. However, since this kind of social order does not yet exist, the criterion is not that of what would be fitting *in* such a social order if it did exist. The question is what, in the existing circumstances, is best calculated to promote the development of such a social order.

If secularism (or any other point of view) is to form a satisfactory philosophy for the people of our day, it must, therefore, accept this concept of an ethically satisfactory community in the solutions it offers to the three problems stated at the beginning of this chapter. The central problem of these three is, as was seen, to formulate and win

acceptance of a set of ethical ideas capable of supporting and guiding the development of a satisfactory social order, and to do this without presupposing or implying a traditional religious ontology. We now see the sort of social order which must be supported and promoted by the ethical ideas formulated by secularism if those ideas are to be satisfactory to the people of our civilization. We have also seen how moral ideas are formulated and critically reformulated. This process, however, involves no reliance upon any assumptions of a traditional religious ontology, nor does it of itself imply any such assumptions. Secularism, therefore, need have no greater difficulty than its rival philosophies in formulating and winning acceptance of a satisfactory set of ethical ideas. In this task moralists of every school can do no more than appeal to the moral "feelings" of themselves and the community, elucidate those "feelings" and work out their expression and implications. It is not with regard to the questions of ethics proper, therefore, that secularism can be said to have any peculiar difficulty.

Secularist Ethics and Moral Discipline

With regard to the first problem, the situation is not as clear. This concerns the problem of whether secularism can give an intellectually satisfactory interpretation of the moral experience of mankind without invoking or implying some distinctive feature of a traditional religious ontology. The answer to this will require a careful analysis of the essential features of the moral experience of mankind and must wait for a later chapter.[2]

It is, however, chiefly with the third problem that secularism has its difficulties. This raises the question of whether it is possible, without creating or relying on a religious devo-

[2] See Chapter 5.

tion, to relate a satisfactory set of moral ideas to the sources of human motivation so as to secure a positive and sufficient response. This question presses hard when we see that a satisfactory set of moral ideas involves the requirement of behavior calculated to support and promote a world society of the kind described above. It is true that this requirement is, in general, endorsed by the moral "feelings" of the people of our time, when these are made explicit and their implications understood; that is the basis of the requirement. But our moral "feelings" are not our only feelings; and the desire to behave consistently with what they require is by no means always our strongest motive. The moral motive must be somehow reinforced if it is to be able to direct our conduct with any high degree of constancy.

Religious teaching seeks to secure this reinforcement by cultivating a habit of attachment, commitment, devotion to some object regarded as of supreme worth, the service of which (or Whom) entails the practice of whatever is implied by the accepted set of moral ideas. For theism this object is a superhuman personal Being. For a humanistic religion it is some form of human society. In our culture humanism takes the form of devotion to the ideal of the sort of society involved in its accepted ethical criterion. Thus the ethical attitude becomes a religious attitude by giving supreme value to the objective indicated by ethical "feeling." That objective becomes sacred to the Humanist.

To secularism, however, nothing is sacred, no object of supreme value. It calls for no high and constant devotion to any particular object. It conceives life as a continuum of means and ends in which no end has absolute value, none is of such importance that it may not sometimes be set aside for some other. It demands freedom for the individual to choose and change his objective at any time in accordance with his changing "feeling" for values and his

changing judgments concerning them. To the consistent and confirmed secularist [3] humanism is an unsavoury, unnecessary, and ineffective emphasis on moral ideals or some particular type of social order, and theism is an expurgated but anachronistic survival of hoary superstitions. Both of them, particularly the latter, are a gratuitous interference with the freedom of the individual in the choice of his own way for the attainment of happiness. Man needs no object of supreme devotion and nothing requires it of him.

Yet man does need to conform his behavior to the requirements of a satisfactory social order, and to make peace with his own "feeling" for moral values. And today the secularist is usually prepared to accept the same broad outlines of what constitutes a satisfactory social order as we have sketched above. He does not reject its universalism, its humanitarianism, or its emphasis on impartiality. He usually insists upon them. And in particular he insists upon the freedom of the individual to choose his own way of life unhindered by the restrictions of any arbitrary traditionalism. The "feeling" for *moral* values, however, while admitted as one of the factors to be reckoned with in the ordering of a satisfactory life, is not given a place of supreme importance.

The secularist emphasizes the relativity of all our values and the fact that the sense of duty, or conscience, is largely (or, as he often says, entirely) a product of social conditioning, an echo of the moral judgments and demands of the previous generation. What concerns him most in his "feeling" for moral values is the opportunity freely to make up his own mind on ethical questions and act accordingly, without subjection to external pressures, whether compul-

[3] In practice one finds that many nontheists inconsistently waver, in thought and conduct, between the standpoints we have here distinguished as the secularist and humanist.

sive or persuasive. In his detailed concept of the ideal moral order he therefore emphasizes chiefly the desirability of freedom from personal restraint.

The freest of social orders, however, requires some restraints. Even anarchy requires restraints morally self-imposed. The secularist, therefore, cannot escape the problem of showing how a sufficient measure of moral self-restraint may be developed in the individual to keep his conduct in conformity with the minimum requirements of the ideal social order; and the more he emphasizes the desirability of removal of external, collectively imposed restraints, the more emphasis must be laid on developing the capacity for self-restraint and canalizing energies into useful, or at least innocuous, channels. Furthermore, since the ideal social order does not yet exist, ethical conduct must involve doing that which will tend to bring it into existence. This often requires tenacious moral determination, capable of great personal sacrifice. Secularism must also show how this can be developed without the development of a religious attitude, an attitude of devotion to some object regarded as supremely worthy. The problem faced by the secularist is to show how the individual, in the free pursuit of the values that appeal to him most, may be led by his own intelligence to exercise such restraints upon his desires and such preferences among the objectives open to him as to direct his behavior in ways calculated to promote that social order most desirable from the standpoint of all concerned. In brief, the secularist must show that true private welfare, and true public welfare, are so nearly one and indivisible that the latter is most likely to be obtained by letting the individual feel morally free to maintain at all times an intelligent pursuit of his own interests, with their mingled concern for himself and others, so long as the pursuit be really intelligent.

Secularism in the Eighteenth Century

The heyday of secularism was the period of the Enlightenment when the assumption was very generally held that enlightened self-interest (usually spoken of as "self-love") is not incompatible with public welfare. The first prominent thinker to present a reasoned empirical argument for this view was John Locke's pupil, the Earl of Shaftesbury. In his *Inquiry Concerning Virtue and Merit* (1699) he presents a careful analysis of human motivation in which he does full justice to the social, disinterested and benevolent impulses of human nature. He divides human impulses into (a) the "Natural Affections," which lead to the good of the public, such as love and sympathy, (b) the "Self-affections," which lead only to private good, such as the appetites, love of praise, and the impulse to self-preservation, (c) the "Unnatural Affections," which lead neither to public nor private good, such as malice, selfishness, jealousy, and vice. He then argues, quite cogently, that to have the first class of impulses strongly developed is the best assurance of happiness, for they are the source of most of our joys and consort well with most of our interests. On the other hand, the second class of impulses, if very strong, are apt to lead us into more trouble than satisfaction; and the third class are always sources of unhappiness. Furthermore, Shaftesbury argues, man has a "moral sense" which responds with emotions of approval upon discerning actions intending the public good, and with disapproval toward those which neglect the public good or intend public injury. To be able to feel moral approval of oneself is among our highest sources of happiness, and to disapprove of oneself is an acute distress. From these considerations he draws the conclusion that there can never be any real conflict

between an enlightened interest in one's own happiness and an interest in the happiness of the community as a whole.

Shaftesbury's assumption that tendencies to approval and disapproval are due to an innate "moral sense" and that this "moral sense" always approves of actions intending the public good and disapproves of selfishness are a part of his argument that needs modification and restatement, but, as Sidgwick points out, Shaftesbury did not consider the doctrine of a moral sense essential to his argument. "Even a man who had no moral sense would, in Shaftesbury's view, always find it his interest to maintain in himself precisely that balance of social and self-regarding affections that is most conducive to the good of the human species." [4] The secularism of the eighteenth century also, in general, found the doctrine of a moral sense unnecessary. The laissez-faire economics of Adam Smith added to the conviction of the sufficiency of enlightened self-interest for social welfare. It assumed that enlightened self-interest would direct attention to the accumulation of wealth, that in a system of competitive free enterprise this would require a man to produce the best possible goods and services and sell them at a price which would be kept low by competition. Thus the needs of the public would best be cared for by individuals pursuing the motive of private gain.

Finally, the reliance on enlightened self-interest attained its culmination in the psychological hedonism of Jeremy Bentham which argued not merely that it is not ethically necessary for anyone to pursue any other end than attainment of his own pleasure and avoidance of his own pain, but that it is not even psychologically possible for him to do so. Pleasure is the only possible goal of human action, and a wise society, recognizing this fact, will legislate so as to

[4] Henry Sidgwick, *Outlines of the History of Ethics* (6th ed.; London: The Macmillan Co., 1931), p. 189.

canalize the seeking of pleasure and avoiding of pain into socially useful and innocuous channels. This Bentham proceeded to show Englishmen how to do in his famous work on the principles of morals and legislation.[5] In papers published after his death[6] we also find him addressing the persuasive argument to the individual that it is *always* most conducive to private happiness to do that which is best for the public welfare, so that vice may be regarded as simply a "miscalculation of chances."

Thus Bentham's psychology and his theory of legislation, added to Adam Smith's economics and Shaftesbury's teaching on the social conditions of human happiness, completed the eighteenth-century argument that human selfishness and pride are not fundamentally moral problems but legislative and educational ones, that egoism is only an evil when unintelligently directed, that to encourage the intelligently directed pursuit of happiness (purely private happiness) is the surest way to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Secularism was triumphant. Religion was unnecessary in any form, and its magical and superstitious elements positively evil.

There is no need to trace in detail the downfall of secularist philosophy in this form. Laissez-faire economics developed all the evils of the industrial revolution and justified them as unavoidable until, in spite of its "dismal science," humanitarian motives and working class pressure combined to force government intervention in the system. Bentham's theory of legislation produced useful reforms in English law but, with the growing tensions of the late nineteenth century and the tragedies of the twentieth, the need for further changes in the social system, based on a different

[5] *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (London, 1780).

[6] *The Deontology*, ed. John Bowring (London, 1834).

philosophy, became increasingly evident. Psychological hedonism was subjected to penetrating criticism. The soundest part of the whole system, Shaftesbury's insistence on the importance of love, sympathy, and other social motives for human happiness, gained increasing recognition, but it has become clear that it does not, of itself, carry the implications he drew from it, particularly when combined with the hedonistic psychology, as was usually done by Shaftesbury and always by Bentham.

The Utilitarianism of J. S. Mill

A significant attempt to amend and improve the theory was introduced in the *Utilitarianism* of John Stuart Mill, in 1863. Mill retained psychological hedonism but introduced a modification which was really inconsistent with it. In calculating his chances for pleasure, he said, an intelligent person will not only consider the intensity, duration and other quantitative measurements of pleasure, but also its differences of quality. The pleasures experienced in the exercise of the higher faculties of mind and personality are so much finer that those who know them would never sacrifice certain of these pleasures for any quantity of other pleasures; "no intelligent human being would consent to be a fool, no instructed person would be ignorant, no person of feeling and conscience would be selfish and base . . . for the most complete satisfaction of all the desires which they have in common with the 'fool' or the 'rascal'." The explanation of this unwillingness, says Mill, may perhaps be attributed to the better form of pride, or to love of liberty and independence, or to love of power or excitement, "but its most appropriate appellation is a sense of dignity, . . . which is so essential a part of the happiness of those in whom it is strong, that nothing which conflicts with it could

be, otherwise than momentarily, an object of desire to them." [7]

Mill does not say that this valuation of the dignity of one's own intellectual and moral integrity is so strong in all people that to indulge in any selfishness or vice, or to give way to pressure and do something regarded as base, would, for any person, be a miscalculation of the chances for happiness. He believed, however, that it would nearly always be so for any person in whom the "sense of dignity" is strong; and he believed that there are many such people. Their numbers, he argued, can be multiplied by training. He admitted that it is possible to doubt "whether a noble character is always the happier for its nobleness," [8] but pointed out that it certainly made others happier and that therefore a wise society will seek to cultivate nobleness of character in its members. It will not only shape legislation so that it will, in general, be in the interests of each person's happiness (even if his "sense of dignity" is not strong) to do that which is conducive to the general happiness, but it will also educate people to think of their own happiness as indissolubly associated with the good of the whole. In particular, he emphasizes the importance of cultivating the "internal sanction of duty," a "feeling" which "is the essence of conscience," [9] and of directing this to the acceptance of the utilitarian principle of the common good. This, he says, should "be taught as a religion, and the whole force of education, of institutions and of opinion, directed . . . to make every person grow up from infancy surrounded on all sides by the profession and the practice of it," and then, he says, we need feel no misgiving about "the sufficiency of the ultimate sanction for the Happiness morality." [10]

[7] J. S. Mill, "Utilitarianism," *"Utilitarianism," "Liberty," and "Representative Government"* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1910), pp. 8–9.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 10. [9] *Ibid.*, p. 26. [10] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

In this argument Mill departs both from psychological hedonism and from secularism. He departs from the former in his assertion of differences of quality among pleasures, for the admission that one may prefer the exercise of his higher faculties and maintenance of the "sense of dignity," even though the pleasure is less, involves the recognition that the motive is not merely a desire for pleasure. The distinction of kind is not a distinction of kind of pleasure but of the kind of activity, attitude, or object in which the pleasure is found. When a "person of feeling and conscience" insists on maintaining his moral integrity and an "intelligent human being" refuses to sacrifice his intellectual integrity, in spite of temptations to prostitute themselves for high monetary rewards, it is the integrity of the moral and intellectual life itself that is valued, not a pleasure of some peculiar quality. A bad conscience may be distressing, but a good conscience is not a peculiar pleasure to gloat over; and the distress of the bad conscience is due to the fact that something valued has been destroyed, namely, integrity of character. Mill's argument does not point to higher kinds of pleasure, but it does point to the fact that there are states of mind and activity that a man may value more than pleasure, and it urges that these states of mind should be held as the supreme values.

Mill's Departure from Secularism

In setting forth intellectual and moral integrity as objects of supreme value Mill also definitely departs from the standpoint of secularism. Secularism recognizes nothing as sacred. To Mill a man's own moral and intellectual integrity is sacred. This is not secularism. Nor is it religion. It is not devotion to something other than the self, but to a form of the self. It is not selfishness, for it may require a

great deal of self-sacrifice in the sense of sacrificing every other form of desire. But it is self-regarding. It is an introverted rather than an extroverted motive.[11] It is a devotion in the opposite direction from religious devotion, which is extroverted, directed to a God or moral law transcendent to oneself. As an opposite devotion to that of religion it is irreligious. Mill himself suggested that its motive may be said to be a form of pride, "a name which is given indiscriminately to some of the most and to some of the least estimable feelings of which mankind are capable." [12] It is pride in the form which usually wins the respect, but never the affection of other men. This cherishing of one's own "sense of dignity" as an "intelligent human being" and a "person of feeling and conscience" is *spiritual* pride.

Spiritual pride is the pitfall most likely to entrap the morally and intellectually strong. More basically than ambition it is "the last infirmity of noble minds." It is, however, more than an infirmity. It is an evil which distorts the work of the strongest, and its effects may be titanic. In a grim metaphor contemporary religious thought has rightly designated it "demonic." Mill himself suggests that it is akin to "the love of power." [13] Here, without realizing it, he puts his finger on the root of the evil. The man who sets a supreme value on his own intellectual and moral integrity inevitably begins to see himself as morally superior to others. He tends to become convinced that he can manage the lives of others better than they themselves can. He then feels himself justified, indeed "called upon," to interfere in the lives of others. He enjoys this "doing good," not merely out of a sympathetic interest in bringing joy into the lives of others, but for the more intense satisfaction he has in its contribution to his "sense of dignity" as a "person of

[11] For definition of these terms as used here see Chapter 3, page 40.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 8. [13] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

feeling and conscience." To attain this satisfaction the good done must be of his own selection, done in his own way, with himself as the principal figure in its execution. The power motive becomes the dominant drive and creates a ruthlessness in the ruling of other people's lives and the pressing of pet programs of "reform" that are often more destructive than the evils they attack.

This tragedy of the moral life, whereby a concern for the best in oneself becomes the very root of evil, is unavoidable if the goal of the moral life is the cultivation of virtue in the self. It can be averted only if attention is turned outward from the moral and intellectual properties of the self to goals beyond the self. If there is to be an object of supreme devotion it must be something other than self, other than one's own "salvation," other than one's own virtue, or "dignity," or integrity, or perfection, or holiness. The moral salvation of a man lies in his having objectives beyond himself in pursuit of which he can forget himself, objectives which will keep the inner structure of the self wholesome without making inner wholesomeness itself the goal. Holiness is not found in the pursuit of holiness, nor happiness in the pursuit of happiness. Both are incidental products of the pursuit of something else, beyond the self, which is really worth pursuing, and in the pursuit of which a man can safely forget himself—and his holiness and happiness.

This, therefore, brings us back to the alternatives of religion and secularism, of devotion to some supremely valued object other than the self or any particular form of self, or of having no object of supreme devotion. The religious alternative, however, as we have seen, may be either traditional or humanistic. And Mill's departure from secularism is not unequivocally irreligious. He suggests the adoption of the humanism of Auguste Comte coupled with

the utilitarian ethic.[14] He would have a devotion to the greatest happiness of the greatest number "taught as a religion." But there is an ambiguity in his position here of a kind which often besets the religious thinker and turns his religion into irreligion. The *motive* which he thinks must be appealed to in order to direct human activity to pursue the good of the whole is not that of a direct interest in human welfare, but an interest in maintaining one's own precious "sense of dignity" as a person of intellectual and moral integrity. Thus humanity is to be served, not for the sake of humanity, but for the sake of one's own precious moral being. In the same way, traditional religion is often (more often in practice than in express statement) misinterpreted to mean that God should be served, not for the sake of the love of God, but for the sake of the moral perfection and salvation of one's own soul. In both cases the motive is introverted, the ultimate goal is not a good external to the self but one's own good. What is cultivated is self-love, not love of God or of humanity. It is not religion, but irreligion, and its tendency is "demonic." To escape this tragic frustration the devotion to the religious object, if any, must be direct and unequivocal; the only other alternative is secularism.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Chapter 3

MORALITY WITHOUT RELIGION
(*Continued*)

The Fallacy of Hedonistic Psychology

Mill's ambiguous statement of the idea of a humanistic religion is due to his untenable psychological position. He still accepts the hedonistic view that all desire is desire for pleasure. He therefore cannot conceive of a direct interest in the welfare of other people which is not an indirect way of pursuing one's own pleasure. A genuine humanistic religious devotion is therefore out of the question for him. Yet he recognizes that a self-sacrificing devotion to a human cause or a moral ideal is, at times, both psychologically possible and ethically necessary. He knows that such conduct cannot always be advocated (or explained, when it occurs) as an indirect means of pursuing pleasures, if we measure pleasure in terms of intensity and duration. Plainly, men must value something other than quantities of pleasure. So he tries to interpret it as a valuing of a pleasure of a higher quality. This leaves the interpretation of human motivation still egoistic and closes the door against any genuine humanism, or any other form of religious devotion.

We have seen that Mill's suggestion that pleasures differ in quality is really a recognition that human beings desire other things besides pleasure, and is thus an abandonment of hedonism. It would be well, however, at this point, to state briefly and clearly where the hedonistic

psychology goes wrong. To discover this, we need to distinguish two sources of pleasure, the pleasures of sensation, such as tastes and smells, and pleasures of interested activity, such as reading, playing games, and doing interesting work. The most important part of our pleasure is of the latter sort. Interested activity, however, is only possible when there is a desire to achieve some goal, e.g., win the game, learn what the book has to tell us, or produce the objective of our work. The desire therefore is not directly a desire for pleasure but for these objectives. The pleasure is incidental to the process of fulfilling a desire for something other than pleasure, e.g., victory, knowledge, or the product of the work. It may be the case that the objective has been chosen because its pursuit has on a previous occasion been found pleasant, but that pursuit will only be found pleasant on the new occasion if the desire for the objective can be reinstated. A man may desire to play golf because in the past he has found it pleasant. However, he has only found it pleasant in the past because it interested him; it stimulated his desire to play. Furthermore, he will continue to find it pleasant only so long as this particular type of goal-directed activity continues to interest him. It is the interest in the activity and its goal, therefore, not the pleasure of the activity, that is primary. Pleasure is not the basic or ultimate motive. The pleasure of satisfaction, or interested activity, is only possible so long as there are desires for something other than such pleasure to be satisfied.

Pursuit of pleasure is, therefore, not the basic motive. Furthermore, it is self-defeating to allow it to become the predominant motive. Even if an activity is engaged in for pleasure, during the course of the activity the pleasure itself must be ignored, for attention to the pleasantness or unpleasantness of one's feeling states during an interested activity is a distraction which impedes the activity and

causes failure. Activity is most enjoyable, and its results most prized, when it is such as to absorb attention so that we forget ourselves and our feeling states by becoming absorbed in what we are doing. The habit of attending to oneself and one's feeling states is therefore a frustrating one. The more we can forget ourselves, and forget the pursuit of pleasure (or happiness) in our interest in absorbing objects, the more we enjoy ourselves.

Extroversion and the Pursuit of Happiness

Modern abnormal psychology has found that, for personality to be wholesome, it must be extroverted rather than introverted. An extroverted interest is one that finds its end, or objective, in maintaining or changing some state of affairs outside the self. An introverted interest is one that finds its end, or objective, in maintaining or changing some state of affairs within the self, such as the balance of pleasure and pain or the prestige status of the idea of the self.[1] A person whose *predominant* set of interests are of the introverted type may be said to be "egoistic." If his predominant interests are in his pleasure and comfort his character is "selfish." If it is the prestige status of the self that constitutes his chief concern, and if he believes in his own prestige, his case is one of "pride." If he does not believe in his own possession of a reasonable prestige, but feels constantly impelled to seek it, his case is not one of pride, but of affliction by an "inferiority complex," which is a third type of egoism, distressing to its possessor as well as annoying or dangerous to others.

It is generally recognized that an inferiority complex is psychologically unwholesome, but it is not always realized

[1] These definitions conform to a very wide range of psychological usage though there is no complete unanimity of definition among psychologists.

that the same is true of selfishness and pride. This is so because they tend to frustrate a person's success and spoil his enjoyment. The secret of success is the capacity to concentrate attention upon the object one must deal with; the secret of enjoyment is to become absorbed in that object and in the dealing with it. But a strong habit of attending to one's own feeling states, or giving thought to one's prestige, diverts attention from the object, often at crucial moments, and all too often to allow the individual really to do his best. The work, play, and social activities of the introverted egoist are thus always below his real capacities; and his egoism, being obvious to others, also induces opposition. He thus finds himself frustrated, never satisfied, insecure; and frequently the result is the development of a more or less neurotic personality.

There is a fourth type of egoism, however, which is characteristic of the extrovert rather than the introvert. It is not psychologically unwholesome, and as a moral fault it consists in "thoughtlessness' as far as other people are concerned, rather than selfishness. It is the egoism of the extrovert who is interested in a variety (more or less extensive) of objects, and readily becomes happily absorbed in his interest in them, but the welfare of other people plays only a small part among his objects of interest. He therefore often ignores their welfare in pursuit of these other interests. An "altruist," on the other hand, is a person predominantly extroverted, who has a wide range of strong interests concerned with the welfare of other people and is commonly happily absorbed in the pursuit of those interests.

Happiness is found in the successful pursuit of one's interests, be they extroverted or introverted, concerned with the welfare of other people or concerned with other objects and tending to an ignoring of the welfare of other people.

The introverted person, however, pursuing his own happiness as an end, tends to frustrate himself in the way we have seen, and finds little happiness. The egoistic extrovert, if his objectives are sufficiently absorbing, varied, nonconflicting, and within his powers, may find a great deal of happiness. But his thoughtlessness for others is apt to arouse opposition and win him little cooperation. He is therefore likely to find himself unsuccessful in his social relations and frequently frustrated. The altruist, on the other hand, has the best chance of happiness. Being predominantly extroverted he does not often frustrate himself, like the introvert, by the direct pursuit of happiness or prestige. Being habitually thoughtful of others' welfare, he wins cooperation rather than opposition and attains more frequent success. Further, the objects of his interest are of the sort most naturally and spontaneously interesting to human beings of all objects outside the self, namely, other human beings. Therefore, the interest in the object easily tends to become absorbing. The spontaneous and direct interest in other human beings is also, normally, an interest which prefers their well-being to their ill-being. An interest in injuring other human beings is usually an indirect interest, the injury of others being seen, not as the most ultimate end in view, but as a means to some other end, such as power, prestige, or revenge.

This analysis of human motivation and of the way in which happiness arises in human experience therefore tends, in a very important respect, to bear out Shaftesbury's argument for the general coincidence of public and private happiness or welfare. It rejects the egoistic form of the argument—that the pursuit of private happiness will always tend to produce public welfare. Indeed, it shows that this has a tendency not even to produce private welfare. However, it supports the slightly modified converse proposition

that the pursuit of public welfare is, in general, the most likely way for the individual to promote his own happiness.

It shows, nevertheless, that this is not a simple matter of making a decision to adopt the right means to an end. It requires that one's own happiness, as an end, be largely ignored and forgotten in the development of an interest in the means to the general happiness. Here the program of enlightened self-interest finds itself faced with an impasse. To pursue an end successfully we must keep that end in sight and carefully choose the means to it. But in the pursuit of happiness the choice of the correct means requires that we must, in general, cease to pursue the end, indeed ignore it. The program of enlightened self-interest is therefore self-defeating. It is not the way to the true well-being of the individual; still less does it contain the promise of being the best way to obtain the public good. The defense of secularism as a program requiring only the general cultivation of enlightened self-interest therefore breaks down.

John Dewey's Analysis of Motivation

In the philosophy of John Dewey, however, secularism can find a much more promising, because a much more nearly correct, interpretation of human motivation. Dewey's philosophy is many-sided. He does not hold rigidly to either a secularistic or humanistic viewpoint. His analysis of human motivation, however, as found in his principal work [2] on the subject, is distinctively secularistic and has been very influential. We shall examine it as an example of secularism at its best.

Dewey interprets human behavior as neither a pursuit of

[2] *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1922). Quotations in this chapter with pages indicated in parentheses are from this work.

pleasure nor as a set of more or less coordinated instinctive responses to specific stimuli which drive toward specific ends. With true insight, he lays primary emphasis, instead, on the essentially active nature of the living organism. Man cannot help acting. He does not need specific motives or stimuli to make him act. He acts anyway. "To a healthy man inaction is the greatest of woes" (p. 119). In the infant this activity is almost entirely unorganized; it is simply "impulsive." It tends to become canalized by interaction with the environment, which becomes effective through the organism's susceptibility to pleasure and pain and its biological needs. The ways in which native appetites and "instincts" can be satisfied, however, are so multifarious that it is not the native endowment that gives rigidity to conduct, but habits created under the influence of the particular form of environment. The environment inhibits certain forms of activity by making them painful, unsatisfying, or simply impossible. To other forms of activity it gives free play and full occupation. These forms of activity are found pleasant and tend to be repeated. They become established habits, fixed forms of interest. Such habits must include ways of satisfying biological needs, appetites, and "instincts," but there are multifarious ways in which this can be done.

In the formation of habit, Dewey also rightly insists, it is the social environment, rather than the physical, that is usually of most importance. The physical environment is generally sufficient for the needs of life and civilization if the habits of society are adequate to utilization and distribution of its resources.

> Habits are arts. They involve skill of sensory and motor organs, cunning or craft, and objective materials. They assimilate objective energies and eventuate in command of environment (p. 15).

Habit is

> that kind of human activity which is influenced by prior activity and in that sense acquired; . . . which is projective, dynamic in quality, ready for overt manifestation (pp. 40–41).

The influence of the social environment in the formation of habit is seen in the learning of the language and adoption of the customs of the group into which the child is born. Individuals form their personal habits under conditions set by the prior habits, or customs, of their social group. Even his morality an individual acquires, in the first place, from his society, as he acquires his language (p. 58).

Habits, Dewey points out, are the inert factor in human behavior. Impulse is highly malleable.

> It is precisely custom which has greatest inertia, . . . while instincts are most readily modifiable through use, most subject to educative direction (p. 107).

While it is possible to deveolp a habit of inquiry yet, of habits in general, he correctly says that by themselves they are "too organized, too insistent and determinate to need to indulge in inquiry or imagination" (p. 177). Deliberate inquiry and the acquirement of new knowledge therefore only occur when habit is unable to find smooth expression.

> We know at such times as habits are impeded, when a conflict is set up in which impulse is released (p. 183).

> Deliberation is a dramatic rehearsal (in imagination) of various competing, possible lines of action (p. 190).

Choice is simply

> hitting in imagination upon an object which furnishes an adequate stimulus to the recovery of overt action. Choice is made as soon as some habit, or some combination of elements of habits and impulse, finds a way fully open. . . . It is the

> emergence of a unified preference out of competing preferences. . . . All deliberation is a search for a *way* to act, not for a final terminus (pp. 192–93).

It will be seen that, in Dewey's analysis, normal human motivation is presented as distinctly extroverted from the beginning. Choice is made not by attention to inner feelings, but by attention to objects and by finding that way of attending to them in which impulse and habit find release in action. Pain and pleasure play their role in deliberation, he says,

> not . . . by way of a calculated estimate of future delights and miseries, but by way of experiencing present ones (p. 200).

We think of future objects and actions, and we are *now* pleased or pained by the thought and act accordingly. The goal is then not a future pleasure, but a future objective state of affairs the thought of which now pleases us. He does not say that it is impossible to make a goal of our future feeling states, as the Hedonist thinks we do and advises us to do, but he says that the Hedonist's advice can only issue in

> a sickly introspection and an intricate calculus of remote, inaccessible and indeterminable results (p. 202).

In his emphasis on the extrovert character of normal human activity Dewey, however, particularly in his earlier writings, failed to take account of the extent to which, especially in civilized communities, introverted habits tend to develop, and of the persistency with which they modify the hedonic tone experienced in intelligent contemplation of possible lines of action, so that impulse and habit find release in ways not really desirable from the standpoint of either the individual or the community. Furthermore,

although the social environment is of predominant influence in the shaping of habits, those of the extroverted egoistic type are altogether too common and too strong for social welfare. This arises for two reasons: (*a*) because biological needs and "instinctive" drives seek the easiest way to their satisfaction, which is often a socially undesirable way, and (*b*) because the social influence on habit formation comes chiefly from the groups with which the individual has closest relations, and these often express little consideration for other groups and even prejudice against them. Even though it may be argued that a sufficiently intelligent examination of the alternatives and their consequences would have led to different choices and different habits the fact remains that the socially undersirable habits exist. And it is the existing habits that, in interaction with impulse and the environment, determine when deliberation shall occur, which direction inquiry shall first take, and what prospect shall appear sufficiently promising to secure release of habit-impulse in renewed action.

Dewey's Theory of Social Progress

Even if he underestimates the prevalence and tenacity of introverted egoism Dewey is certainly well aware of the evils in what we have here called extroverted egoism. He therefore sets out to show how we may work progressively toward the overcoming of these evils. And his solution of the problem is thoroughly secularistic. It recognizes no goal as calling for supreme devotion, no moral principle as sacred. The only loyalty for which Dewey calls is not to an object or a principle but to a method, the effective use of intelligence in the solution of problems as they arise. Good is identified with satisfaction, not in the sense of pleasant feeling, or in that of arriving at an end, the satiation of a

desire, but in the sense of solving a problem which has impeded activity so that activity can go on unimpded.

> Good consists in the meaning that is experienced to belong to an activity when conflict and entanglement of various incompatible impulses and habits terminate in a unified orderly release in action (p. 210).

This might suggest that any solution is as good as another, but Dewey guards against this.

> Moreover there is a genuine difference between a true and a false good, a spurious satisfaction, and a "true" good, and there is an empirical test for discovering the difference. The unification which ends thought in act may be only a superficial compromise, not a real decision but a postponement of the issue. Many of our so-called decisions are of this nature. Or it may present, as we have seen, a victory of a temporarily intense impulse over its rivals, a unity by oppression and suppression, not by co-ordination. These seeming unifications which are not unifications of fact are revealed by the event, by subsequent occurrences (pp. 210–11).

The unification of which Dewey here speaks is not the unification of the individual with society, but simply such a unification of the "incompatible impulses and habits" of the individual which enables them to find "a unified, orderly release in action." An activity, achieving such unification is, by Dewey's definition, satisfactory or good. Of course, if the unification should prove superficial or temporary because the activity runs into difficulties with the social environment, such as again arouse incompatible impulses and habits in the individual, then it would be revealed as not a "true" good. The truly good decision must open the way to an activity which can attain its ends-in-view and contribute to the indefinite continuity of further activity with a minimum of internal conflict. Such a decision

is, for Dewey, morally good, and it is in such activity that the welfare of the individual consists. If our actions are to be of benefit to others they must give them the opportunity for the same kind of activity.

> To foster conditions that widen the horizon of others and give them command of their own powers, so that they can find their own happiness in their own social fashion, is the way of "social" action (p. 294).

This conception of desirable social conditions accords with our own description of an ethically satisfactory community in the previous chapter.[3] The question, therefore, is whether such social conditions will tend to be promoted by personal decisions made in accord with Dewey's analysis —decisions which issue from intelligent thought, activated by conflict in the life of impulse and habit, and seeking a line of activity in which that life can genuinely find "a unified, orderly release in action." Does the integrated wholeness, or integrity, of the purposive life of the individual require that, in his social relations, he must manifest adequate respect and concern for the welfare of others? Dewey appears to believe that it does; and we agree. We are convinced, however, that Dewey's analysis of human motivation does not show that it does and cannot do so unless a clear break is made with the standpoint of secularism and it is recognized that what we have called man's moral "feelings" require that he should make place for a God in his life, i.e., for an object recognized as worthy of supreme devotion.

In his analysis of human motivation Dewey gives fully adequate place to human sympathy and good will, but he does not do justice to the experience of conscience. The

[3] See Chapter 2, page 24.

moral consciousness, he believes, is simply an outgrowth from social relationships, an effect of social conditioning. It is in this social foundation of conscience that he finds both the justification for freedom from all fixed moral rules and the ground for belief that such freedom, intelligently used, must eventuate in human good.

> These two facts, that moral judgment and moral responsibility are the work wrought in us by the social environment, signify that all morality is social; not because we *ought* to take into account the effect of our acts upon the welfare of others, but because of facts. Others *do* take account of what we do, and they respond accordingly to our acts. Their responses actually *do* affect the meaning of what we do (p. 316).

Our moral "feelings" of responsibility and obligation are thus regarded as having no greater importance than the *actual* demands of society whence they are directly or indirectly derived. There is no reason why their demands should be given a place of supreme importance in our decisions. Yet the actual demands of society, and the interdependence of the individual and society, are such that Dewey believed that if we can free our minds from the influence of past errors and superstitions, and from that of the institutions they have created, and pursue with scientific intelligence the solution of our problems, then the solutions which make for the true good of the individual will tend in general to the true good of society. The intelligence of the individual must seek, amidst all his social and physical relations, that outlet for his energies which promises most continuous, "unified orderly release in action." What makes for social evil is not our doing this intelligently, but our doing it unintelligently; and, the source of conscience being merely the value judgments and demands of others in the past, it is unintelligent to make any end imposed by conscience supreme.

Three Flaws in Dewey's Thesis

The argument which reaches this secularistic conclusion has three fatal flaws. The first is the failure to give due weight to the rigidities in human nature and society. We may grant the plasticity of impulse and the openness of multifarious ways in which biological needs and instinctive drives may find their satisfaction. This plasticity, however, is steadily lost as the child grows into the adolescent and then into the adult; and many of the multifarious ways open are much more troublesome than others. We tend to take the easiest way even when it is socially not the most desirable. The growing rigidities of habit and institution limit and direct the activity of intelligence itself. The existence of certain habits often creates a situation in which the promise of most continuous "unified orderly release in action" lies in a line of activity which in the long run is socially evil. Intelligence, seeking a way for release of energy in action, seeks a way congenial to existing habits, for one that is uncongenial does not promise "unified orderly release" but painful and troublesome adjustment. Every line of action involves some conflict and competition with other members of society; and intelligence finds its promise of most "unified orderly release" in choosing to conflict with those whose opposition is most easily overcome, particularly when it is supported in such exploitation of the weak by the example of the strongest or most numerous section of society. Against such results of the intelligent seeking of outlet for energy, society has erected some barriers in concepts of justice, but these are often distorted by the concerted intelligently operating energies of powerful groups; and even where this is not the case the intelligence of the individual, seeking its "unified orderly release in action," will only be influenced by concepts of justice in

so far as his conscience may be worried by the thought of injustice, or society exerts pressures in its support. Yet conscience, interpreted as merely an effect of social conditioning, is something that intelligence should ignore except so far as it points to existing social conditions that may affect the course of activity.

The second flaw in Dewey's position is that his analysis of the judgment of value, rejecting, as it does, any special place for moral values, turns the pursuit of the good into a pursuit of power. The intelligent choice is the choice that enables the energy of impulse and habit to find a unified and orderly release in action which is no mere superficial or temporary adjustment, but avoids future conflict within and without, giving free course to the ongoing activity. It is therefore a choice which learns how to avoid frustration from the environment and how to overcome the sources of frustration which cannot be avoided. The mark of intelligent choice becomes its tendency to increase the power and skill with which the individual can turn every feature of the environment, human and nonhuman, into means for the fullest and freest expression of his own impulsive energy and habitual drive. The only mark of an error in evaluation is the discovery that it has created a "conflict and entanglement of various incompatible impulses and habits," or led to an environmental situation which does not permit of their "unified and orderly release in action" (p. 219). But so long as a decision does not create a conflict of impulse and habit within the self, and gives it power to overcome any opposition in the environment, there is nothing in Dewey's criterion to say that it is wrong. What, then, could be more right than the decision which avoids conflict of impulse and habit by being in accord with a man's dominant desires, and which guarantees against frus-

tration from without by giving him control of the material and social means to obtain those desires?

The third flaw in Dewey's argument is the inadequacy of his analysis of conscience. It is this which accounts for his refusal to give supremacy to moral values and thus involves his analysis in the defects already mentioned. Dewey is rightly in revolt against all intuitionistic ethical theories which would claim absolute authority for any set of specific moral principles, such as we find in the Thomistic doctrine of "natural law." But in his reaction from authoritarianism he finds no place to stop, short of a complete rejection of the supremacy of any moral ideal. He adopts the explanation of conscience put forward by a great many naturalistic psychologists. It is simply a result of social conditioning. The mind of the child echoes the value judgments he hears expressed by those around him. He passes upon his own actions the judgments he hears expressed concerning similar actions performed by himself or others. He joins the group in making demands upon individuals. He shares in expressing group approval and disapproval of the actions of others. He experiences it directed upon himself and inevitably tends to feel toward his own actions the sort of approval and disapproval he had joined in expressing upon the similar actions of others. Thus conscience becomes a voice within expressing the moral judgment that is expected from without.

Criticism of Dewey's Theory of Conscience

For an extended criticism of this explanation of conscience and its alternatives, I must refer the reader to what I have written elsewhere.[4] Here our criticism may be briefly developed in three main points. First, the theory does not

[4] *The Moral Nature of Man* (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1952).

accord with what we *mean* by saying an action is right or wrong. To say "To hang that man was wrong" does not merely mean that the speaker feels disapproval of it, or that people in general, or his own social group, object to it or disapprove of it. It does not even mean that they would object to it or disapprove of it if they understood enough about it, as the speaker does. The statement asserts that the hanging was contrary to a standard of conduct somehow required of those concerned in the action. The speaker may agree that he has learned of the standard from the social group. But if he accepts the group's authority it is because he believes the group has reason to believe it is the true standard, or has the right by some higher standard to determine the standard in this matter. The conscience of the individual, expressed in the condemnation of the hanging, therefore expresses a judgment about the hanging in relation to some ideal standard, and it involves a belief that there are good reasons for that judgment, even though the speaker may admit that he does not know what they are, having adopted his judgment on the authority of those he believes do know. More often, however, the speaker believes that he does know sufficient reasons for his judgment and that they are quite independent of the question as to how he first formed the judgment, or of how many people, if any, agree with him in it. The fact that the moral judgment is thus critically independent of the effects of social conditioning is incompatible with the view that it merely expresses an attitude due to social conditioning.[5]

Secondly, when conscientious inquiry is undertaken on any question of what is ethically right or wrong, appeal is always ultimately made to the effects of action upon human welfare. Even when, as in the case of Kant, a thinker tries to make his ethical theory independent of such empirical

[5] This point is further discussed in Chapter 4.

considerations, he nevertheless feels it incumbent upon him to show that his theory supports moral judgments which accord with human welfare. Even though he rejects all absolutes he nevertheless tends to support his own moral judgments by the one final criterion—the effect of an action upon human well-being—and he often criticizes absolutism by showing that it tends to support principles which are not in accord with human well-being. We should therefore recognize that, though the uncritical conscience may merely echo the tradition in which it has been cradled and conditioned, the critical conscience has its own standard implicit in all its thinking—human well-being. Differences arise, not from a rejection of this standard as *the* standard of moral obligation, but from two sources: (*a*) from different views of the nature and needs of man and thus of the nature and conditions of his well-being, (*b*) from tendencies to assert more or less arbitrary limits to the human groups for whose well-being we have any moral responsibility.

Thirdly, in spite of the effects of social conditioning, which tend to limit moral responsibility to narrow and friendly groups, the critical moral conscience has tended, through the long history of ethical thinking, to break these barriers down. From the assertion of a limited range of specific duties to kinsmen and kindred groups it passed to the duty to "love thy neighbor as thyself." From a duty to one's neighbor limited to "the children of thy people" it passed to the brotherhood of man. And from a limitation of "neighbor" to those who are neighborly it passed to, "Love your enemies." These transitions were made by critical ethical thinking in opposition to inherited moral traditions and in spite of opposing emotional tendencies and habits. The critical moral conscience must therefore be recognized as carrying its standard somehow implicitly

within itself, a standard which persistently tends to affect our "feeling" for moral values, and which has gradually been made explicit in critical thinking.[6]

Of the three flaws in Dewey's argument for the secularist position in ethics, the first two point to its practical dangers. It presents no adequate reason why the individual should not often take the shortest and easiest route to the fulfillment of his own desires even at the cost of the public welfare. And it actually encourages the pursuit of power.[7] We are thereforce forced to the conclusion that Dewey's interpretation of human motivation fails, as did earlier interpretations, to show how secularism, without creating or relying on a religious devotion, can relate a satisfactory set of moral ideas to the sources of human motivation so as to secure a positive and sufficient response. This, as we saw above,[8] is the practical requirement which secularism is called upon to fulfill; and it has failed. For no other thinkers have defended the cause of secularism better than those we have examined.

[6] For an analysis of human nature which shows that this standard is empirically discovered as a condition of psychological integrity rather than rationally intuited as an a priori principle, see *The Moral Nature of Man* (*op. cit.*).

[7] The failure of Dewey's psychology and ethics to supply the theoretical basis for a liberal and democratic social order is now recognized by a considerable number of naturalistic philosophers, e.g., Morton G. White, in *Social Thought in America* (New York: Viking Press, Inc., 1949). In reviewing this book Arthur Murphy adds emphasis to White's criticisms, saying, "But the basic defect in this way of thinking *as a social philosophy* is surely much more serious than Professor White's analysis suggests. A liberalism whose intellectual standards deprive it of the right to appeal on principle to right and justice as justifying reasons is not merely somewhat incomplete. It is morally incapacitated. Its scientific method cannot make sense of the rational cogency of its ideals and itself makes no 'liberal' sense without them. Hence the easy transition of an 'instrumentally' educated generation to compromise, to cynicism, or to antiliberal authority when the trend of events makes liberal ideals difficult to hold. A liberalism that has lost its moral principles does not long retain its authority as a social gospel." *The Philosophical Review*, October, 1951, p. 582.

[8] See Chapter 2, page 19.

The third flaw in Dewey's argument (his inadequate analysis of conscience) is an example of the failure of secularist philosophy to solve what, above,[9] we called its first problem—to give an intellectually satisfactory interpretation of the moral experience of mankind without invoking or implying some distinctive feature of a traditional religious ontology. It was in order to avoid any possible implications of a traditional religious nature that Dewey so emphatically rejected the distinctive nature and supreme importance of moral values. But in explaining the whole experience of the constraint of conscience as an effect of habits of thought unconsciously, or almost unconsciously, borrowed from the social environment, he cannot do justice to the independence of critical ethical thinking, or to its constant tendency to refer to the criterion of an impartial concern for human values, or to the peculiar insistency with which it makes its claims that its values should be supreme over all other values—even over those values which have a clear and present social endorsement of the sort which conscience (on the theory of its origin in social conditioning) is supposed merely to echo.

The Basic Defect of Secularism

This analysis of typical and important social philosophies of secularism, and of the psychology of human motivation, enables us to see why secularism cannot meet man's needs. In refusing to recognize any supremely worthy object of devotion external to the self it leaves man without an external standard by which to integrate his own impulsive life and unify the social order. He must therefore either leave his impulsive life without any unifying factor or he must turn his attention within and adopt as the guiding principle of his choices the securing of that "unified

[9] See Chapter 2, page 19.

and orderly release in action" in which Dewey finds that good is experienced (p. 210).

Secularism therefore means that either life is lived without a unifying guide or guidance is found through an inward direction of attention in the selecting of our goals which must inevitably tend to introvert the personality. In practice, the secularistic individual tends to oscillate between the two—between the ununified pursuit of a variety of extrovert goals and introverted consideration and choice of what appears to promise the greatest satisfaction, the fullest and most continuous "unified and orderly release in action." Fortunately, the conditions of human life are usually such that most people make their adjustments without very serious conflict and introversion. Yet without the spiritually unifying and extroverting influence involved in the recognition of an objective beyond the self supremely worthy of devotion no personality can develop its maximum unity and effectiveness. And for lack of it many make shipwreck of their lives. For lack of such a directive, or for lack of adequate recognition of its implications and consistent devotion to it, society, too, is torn into conflicting groups or disintegrated into a struggling confusion of competing individuals, uninspired by any spirit of unity and mutual responsibility.

Man, therefore, needs a God in his life. He needs to hold to the idea of something beyond his individual self that is worthy to be supreme among those objects to which he is prepared to devote himself. The standpoint of secularism leaves him floundering in the futility of indecisiveness or turns him inward upon himself to experience the frustrations of egoism or develop the insensibility and iniquity of spiritual pride. To keep his spirit whole and draw forth from it its best man needs a God to serve, a God whom he can love with all his heart and all his life and all

his mind, a God to whose service he can commit himself with self-forgetting zeal and yet know that in such commitment the truest interest of himself and his society will be secure. Secularism, therefore, must be abandoned. Man must turn to the standpoint of religion. But can he find the God he needs for the orientation and invigoration of his life among the traditional concepts of religion, such as some form of theism, or will he do better to abandon the traditional forms of religion for the naturalistic conceptions found in some form of humanism? This is the question with which the thinker is faced as soon as he has recognized the inadequacy of the standpoint of secularism for human life at its best.

Chapter 4

THE FAITH OF HUMANISM

The Humanism of Erich Fromm

Though Dewey's psychology and technical philosophy are distinctly secularistic, there is much in his broad philosophy of life and social writings that expresses an attitude of the humanistic religious type. In *A Common Faith*,[1] and elsewhere, he makes a plea for a devotion of religious intensity to ideal ends. His, however, is not a typical humanism. It is not to any form of human society that he advocates devotion. He recognizes that the objective must be something beyond the self and that it must give unity to all ideal ends that arouse us to action. But he refuses to fix those ideal ends in any object or principle. Each person must find for himself inclusive ideal ends to which he can give allegiance, and Dewey's only program for finding them is a devotion of religious intensity to intelligence as a force in social action.

For a fuller discussion of Dewey's philosophy of religion I must refer the reader to what I have written elsewhere,[2] but the above comments will show that Dewey's position is not strictly a humanistic religion, in the sense in which we are using that term. It is rather a plea for a religiously intense concern for intelligent and scientific methods within the viewpoint of secularism. As he himself says, this is an

[1] John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934).

[2] See especially *The Moral Nature of Man* (*op. cit.*), pp. 256–66.

experiment which mankind has not yet tried. Nor is this surprising, for it is a type of devotion that is only possible for a limited number of intellectuals.

A more promising approach, for humanism, is that of Erich Fromm, a writer whose penetrating thought is illuminated by his rich experience as a psychoanalyst. Man's religious need, says Fromm, is "a need to have a frame of orientation and an object of devotion," and "there is no one without a religious need." [3] He supports these statements with evidence from his clinical experience and quotes from an earlier work (*Man for Himself*):

> Self-awareness, reason and imagination have disrupted the "harmony" which characterizes animal existence. Their emergence has made man into an anomaly, into the freak of the universe. He is part of nature, subject to the physical laws and unable to change them, yet he transcends the rest of nature. . . . The disharmony of man's existence generates needs which far transcend those of his animal origin. These needs result in an imperative drive to restore a unity and equilibrium between himself and the rest of nature. . . . Devotion to an aim, or an idea, or a power transcending man such as God, is an expression of this need for completeness in the process of living.[4]

This observation concerning man's psychological need of an attitude of devotion to some idea, aim, power, or other object beyond himself, to give unity to his psychic life, is borne out by a wealth of psychological evidences. In spite of the fact that, as we shall see, traditional religion contains many psychologically unwholesome features [5] the

[3] Erich Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 25.

[4] Ibid., pp. 22–24.

[5] In an elaborate research on anti-Semitism a positive correlation was found between uncritical acceptance of a religious tradition and a similar uncritical acceptance of the stereotypes typical of race prejudice. On the other hand, it was found that "persons or groups who 'take religion seriously' in a more internalized sense are likely to be opposed to ethnocen-

results of very large-scale tests, given by the Adjustment Service of the City of New York, point to the same conclusion by showing that persons who believed in religion or attended church have significantly better personalities than those who do not. Dr. Henry C. Link, who took part in this project, reports that this was shown to be the case by a statistical study of the records on 10,000 persons who took a total of 73,226 tests.[6] In his remarkable book, *The Return to Religion*, he tells how this study, added to his clinical experience, led him, although at the time holding neither to traditional nor humanistic religious views, to encourage the growth of religious faith and practice in his patients as a means to restoring their mental health. Dr. Link was led by these discoveries to recover the essential elements in the traditional religion in which he had been raised. Dr. Fromm has tried to fill the need by seeking a firm basis in psychology for a religious humanism. He draws a sharp distinction between authoritarian and humanistic religions, adopting a definition of the humanistic which is different from ours.

An authoritarian religion is defined by Fromm as one in which the object of devotion is recognized as a power requiring a complete submission of the worshiper. This type includes communism and fascism as well as Catholicism, Calvinism and most forms of traditional religion. Humanistic religion, as he defines it, includes both democratic humanism (by our definition) and the religion of Jesus and Isaiah, Socrates, Spinoza, Buddha, and Lao Tze. The theis-

trism." Those who rejected traditional forms of religion also usually rejected the traditional prejudicial stereotypes, but this depended on the ground of the opposition to religion, e.g. whether it was part of an opposition to repression and reaction or was an expression of cynical utilitarianism. T. W. Adorno, *et al.*, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1950), pp. 730–32.

[6] Henry C. Link, *The Return to Religion* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1936), pp. 12–13.

tic religions which Fromm includes in the humanistic group are those which emphasize the doctrine of immanence of God in man. In them, he says, the idea of God functions as a symbol of *man's own powers*, which he tries to realize, rather than as a symbol of forceful domination exercising a power over man. In all humanistic religion, thus understood, virtue is self-realization, not obedience; faith is a conviction based on one's own experience, not on authority. In its nontheistic types this "humanistic" religious experience is "the experience of one-ness with the All" and requires man to develop his capacity of "love for others as well as for himself" and to "experience the solidarity of all living beings." [7]

In the Hebrew-Christian tradition, says Fromm, there has always been a strain of this humanistic religion competing with authoritarianism. The former tends to arise in societies where the individual has freedom and responsibility or among minorities struggling for freedom. The latter supervenes when Church or State becomes highly organized and dominant over the individual. The Jews in their struggles developed frequent manifestations of the humanistic trend and early Christianity was a religion of the same type, but wherever religion allied itself with secular power it necessarily became authoritarian. In both forms the individual finds a way to unify himself, but in the latter this occurs at the cost of loss of strength and freedom and often produces tendencies to psychological perversion. In the former the unification is one that promotes psychological and social health.

The metaphysical and supernatural elements in the Hebrew-Christian tradition Fromm considers an unnecessary embarrassment to humanistic religion in the present day. The function of religion is the care of the soul, the

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

"optimal development of a person's potentialities," [8] and the unfolding of his powers of reason and of love. This is the common aim of all the great religions of East and West; and its achievement is independent of theories of ultimate reality and the origin of the universe. The real threat to this goal lies in the wrong attitudes of people to the practical problems of life, particularly in the "marketing orientation" [9] of modern man, wherein a man's success and value are determined not by what he is, or by his service to society but by the price at which he can "sell himself" to those who can use him.

Fromm's "Model of Human Nature"

To the relativists who say that such a statement of the religious aim is meaningless because there is no way of determining what is the "optimal development of a person's potentialities," Fromm replies that it can be determined with sufficient accuracy by "the science of man," to which the practice of psychoanalysis has made contributions of very great importance. This is the theme of his earlier work, *Man for Himself*. The weakness in Dewey's position, he there argues,[10] is its failure to recognize, as did Spinoza, that there is a "model of human nature" which can be determined by scientific study in advance of its achievement and can be held steadily before the individual as the goal at which to aim. This goal can be known even before we know the means by which to achieve it. The means can be discovered experimentally after the "science of man" has determined the end.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 100.
[10] Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself* (New York: Rhinehart & Co., 1947), p. 28. Quotations in this chapter with pages indicated in parentheses are from this work.

The method of the "science of man" must, of course, first determine what are the potentialities of human nature and what constitutes their optimal development. Drawing on the personality studies of contemporary psychology, and particularly on the experience of the psychoanalysts' dealings with thwarted and maldeveloped personalities and their cure, Fromm proceeds to find the key to optimal development in what he calls the "productive orientation" of character. This is a mode of relatedness to the world which is not only productive of material things, objects of art, systems of thought, and so forth, according to the ability and opportunity of the individual, but involves, above all, the attitude of "productive love" toward man himself. "Productive love" is defined as a concept similar to the Christian concept of "agape" (charity or love). It involves *care*, *responsibility*, and *knowledge*.

> To love a person productively implies to care and to feel responsible for his life, not only for his physical existence but for the growth and development of all his powers (p. 110).

Productive love toward a limited number of persons is a common human experience, but such love toward all mankind is relatively rare. Yet, says Fromm, the two cannot logically be separated.

> To love one person productively is to be related to his human core. . . . Human solidarity is the necessary condition for the unfolding of any one individual (pp. 100–01).

Furthermore, Fromm argues, productive love toward others is inseparable from productive love of—i.e. proper care for, knowledge of, and responsibility for—oneself. To love one's neighbor as oneself implies a loving of oneself as one's neighbor. But such love is not to be confused with selfishness or any form of egoism.

> The selfish person is interested only in himself, wants everything for himself, feels no pleasure in giving, but only in taking, . . . he lacks interest in the needs of others. . . . It is true that selfish persons are incapable of loving others, but they are not capable of loving in the sense of "productive love" themselves either (pp. 130–31).

This, says Fromm, is the basic psychological premise on which his argument rests.

> Love of others and love of ourselves are not alternatives. On the contrary an attitude of love toward themselves will be found in all those who are capable of loving others. *Love*, in principle, *is indivisible* as far as the connection between objects and one's own self is concerned. Genuine love is an expression of productiveness and implies care, response, responsibility and knowledge (p. 129).

Of vital significance in the care, knowledge, and responsibility involved in self-love is the phenomenon of conscience—or rather, that type of conscience which Fromm calls the "humanistic conscience" as distinguished from the "authoritarian." This distinction appears to be the same as that which we have already made between the "critical" and the "traditional" conscience.

> The authoritarian conscience is the voice of an internalized external authority (p. 143).

> Humanistic conscience is the reaction of our total personality to its proper functioning or disfunctioning. . . . Actions, thoughts and feelings which are conducive to the proper functioning and unfolding of our total personality produce a feeling of inner approval, "rightness," characteristic of the human conscience. On the other hand, acts, thoughts and feelings injurious to our total personality produce a feeling of uneasiness and discomfort, characteristic of the "guilty conscience." Conscience is thus . . . the voice of our true selves which summons us . . . to live productively, to develop fully

> and harmoniously. . . . It is the guardian of our integrity, it is "the ability to guarantee oneself with all due pride, and also at the same time to say yes to one's self." [11]

It follows from this analysis that the "productive" orientation of personality is, in general, the path of true happiness. Happiness is not to be obtained by selfishness, or by concern for subjective states of pleasure. It is enjoyed subjectively, but its conditions are objective and require firmness of character, conscientiousness, and a predominant orientation of productive love. Happiness is therefore man's highest achievement, though it is achieved by aims directed toward other things, such aims constituting its objective conditions. It is also man's most difficult achievement, for it requires the full development of his "productiveness." It is far removed from the path of ease, uncontrolled impulse, and egoism.

Fromm's Conception of Religious Faith

At the next step, Fromm's analysis brings us to religion. The achievement and maintenance of the productive orientation require *faith*. But faith is not to be identified with belief in the metaphysical and supernatural doctrines of traditional religion. Its meaning is rather to be found in the Old Testament term translated as "faith"—*Emunah*—meaning firmness. It is primarily a character trait, "a basic attitude . . . which enables a man to face reality without illusions and yet to live by his faith" (p. 199). The content of belief that arises from such an attitude will differ in different cultures. It may be rational or irrational, the former being "based on productive intellectual and emotional activity," the latter on emotional submission to

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 158–59. The words quoted in the last sentence are from Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*.

irrational authority rather than on the individual's own experience, thought, and feeling. Contemporary criticism of irrational faith has led to a neglect and misunderstanding of the need for rational faith. "Without faith man becomes sterile, hopeless and afraid to the very core of his being" (p. 198).

To have faith in another person is to feel certain of the reliability and constancy of his fundamental attitudes. The same is true of faith in oneself. Both faiths are needed and the culmination of faith in others is faith in mankind.

> In the Western world this faith was expressed in religious terms in the Judaeo-Christian religion and in secular language it has found its strongest expression in the progressive political and social ideas of the last 150 years (p. 207).

It is, of course, to what he has recognized as the humanistic rather than the authoritarian elements in the Judaeo-Christian religion that Fromm is referring, and he is quite right in recognizing this faith as the predominant attitude toward man of Jesus (as recorded in the synoptic gospels) and of the great Hebrew prophets. He is also correct in saying that such religious faith, and the democratic faith, constitute a rational faith "based on the idea that the potentialities of man are such that, given the proper conditions, they will be capable of building a social order governed by the principles of equality, justice and love" (p. 207). But it is also clear that such convictions constitute an act of faith. They are not obvious conclusions forced upon us by obvious conditions, but are based on facts discovered and thus interpreted only by a deep searching beneath the superficial display of venality and hostility, a search requiring human sympathy and patience, motivated by what the New Testament calls "agape" and Fromm calls productive love.

Commitment to the program of action indicated by such faith in mankind is also an act of faith. It requires a "firmness" motivated by agape or productive love. Concerning this Fromm is quite clear. He is at great pains to emphasize the idea that true productive love of others is inseparable from a similar attitude toward oneself, and he declares that this is the basic premise of his argument. But he does not make the mistake of arguing that this means that productive love of self and others will never be incompatible with doing what makes for one's own physical health, security, and prosperity, and the satisfaction of one's strongest and most persistent desires. Productive love, as he has defined it, involves the firm adoption of ideas, goals, and principles that may require great self-sacrifice in certain circumstances. And the conscience of the personality oriented by productive love will demand that he make those sacrifices.

Fromm makes this clear in his discussion of the distinctions between "universal ethics" and "socially immanent ethics." The former he defines as an ethic embodying norms of conduct that aim at the growth and unfolding of man, while the latter is an ethic supporting norms "necessary for the functioning and survival of a specific kind of society and of the people living in it" (p. 240). Between these two types of ethics, he says, "there remains a conflict . . . as long as humanity has not succeeded in building a society in which the interest of 'society' has become identified with the interest of all its members" (p. 243). There is no question as to which type of ethics must be endorsed by the attitude and conscience of productive love, nor is there any question that to stand for the norms of a universal ethic against those of a socially immanent ethic always calls for moral courage, and sometimes for the finest heroism and tragic self-sacrifice. Nor is there any society in which this conflict is not present, nor anyone, therefore, who can

escape the ethical requirement that he take his stand. As Fromm says, "He may be the voice of one who 'crieth in the wilderness,' but only if this voice remains alive and uncompromising will the wilderness be changed to fertile land" (p. 244).

We have presented this extended statement of the argument of Erich Fromm because it shows so competently and clearly (1) that man needs to have some object of devotion beyond himself to give unity and direction to his purposive life, (2) that this object must be one which develops in him the attitude of productive love or it will not satisfy needs implicit in man's nature. These two positive points constitute a contribution to the theory of religious humanism (in the sense of our own definition) which was badly needed. Humanistic writers have, for the most part, been content to present a negative criticism of the supernaturalism and metaphysics of traditional religion, then distinguish this from its ethical content and plead for an enthusiastic endorsement of the best in its ethics, particularly of the ideals of love and freedom. They have not, usually, adequately distinguished their position from what we have called secularism, showing why some values must be held to be supreme and call for high devotion. This lack is supplied by Fromm's insistence on the concept of a "model of human nature" which can be discovered by "the science of man," and from which we can deduce a description of the sort of goals in pursuit of which man's nature can find fulfillment.

The chief feature in this "model" is Fromm's concept of "productive love" and his argument that conduct in accord with this concept is required by the really basic element in the human conscience, which he calls the "humanistic conscience" and distinguishes from the "authoritarian." This involves a rejection of the "social conditioning" theory of conscience which is held by most secularists and many

Humanists. It may be well, therefore, to add some further evidence to what we have already said on this subject; to defend Fromm's distinction of the two types and sources of conscience, which is essentially the same as our own distinction of the critical and the traditional conscience.

The Source of the Critical Conscience

A child learns a language by associating a word heard with some experience he has at the time of hearing it. It is agreed that the meaning of the word "wrong," in its ethical sense, is acquired on occasions when the child (*a*) observes social opposition to some action together with certain types of emotional expression, (*b*) himself feels those emotions aroused if the wrong act is that of some other person, and (*c*) experiences the peculiar inner constraint which we call conscience if the act is his own. It is the third feature of the experience which is decisive for the application of the word "wrong" in its distinctly ethical sense. For not all socially opposed actions are regarded as wrong in the ethical sense; even a young child may claim that his action is right, and that group opposition, even parental opposition, to it is wrong. Only when the action is seen to be of the type that involves the constraint of conscience is the word "wrong," in its ethical sense, felt to be appropriate to it; and only then are the peculiar moral emotions felt regarding it.

According to the social-conditioning theory, the constraints of conscience are due to habits inculcated by the social environment. Society expresses its opposition to certain types of action. The child both feels this pressure upon himself and joins in exercising it on others. Thus a habit of opposition to such types of action and a tendency to feel emotions of disapproval toward it are inculcated in the child; and this habit and emotional tendency operate to

exert the peculiar constraint we call conscience whenever he thinks of performing such an action himself—or of having performed it.

Opponents of the social-conditioning theory must attribute the experience of conscience to something in the prenatal structure of the human being. This structural feature might be given several different types of theoretical explanation. It might be a product of evolution; or an effect of some cosmic laws in accordance with which the experience of value arises (just as there must be some cosmic laws determining the experience of color); or an effect of, or part of, the operation of reason; or the effect of a peculiar, God-given, moral capacity; or some combination of these. For our present purposes, we need not discuss the relative philosophical merits of these alternatives.

The objection to the prenatal explanation of conscience is the great variety and numerous contradictions of conscientious convictions. The argument in favor of the social-conditioning theory is the empirical evidence of the great extent to which such convictions conform to the social tradition. However, they do not entirely conform. In particular, our consciences tend to become uneasy about accepting the social tradition, and impel us to doubt the moral precepts previously conscientiously held whenever we discover that such traditional precepts tend to destroy rather than support human welfare.

This suggests that a compromise view will constitute a more adequate explanation of the whole phenomenon. The prenatal theory may be held to be correct with regard to the critical operation of conscience. This would mean that some prenatal factors in the constitution of man determine that he shall tend to feel a distinctive kind of dissatisfaction with any action observed to be, on the whole, destructive of human welfare, and that, consequently, he tends to feel an

inner constraint against the performance of any such action, however desirable its consequences to himself. Such a tendency would not prevent him from pursuing his private interests in spite of this constraint, but it would tend to set up precisely the type of inner conflict conscience tends to experience in such cases; and this conflict would grow stronger with the development of a tendency to think more about the effect of one's actions upon others.

The operation of the critical conscience and its independence of authoritative approval and disapproval may be illustrated by the following childhood experience reported by an acquaintance of mine. As a boy of barely seven years of age he was introduced to the sex relation by a girl playmate a couple of years older. In perfect innocence, he told other older children of this interesting experience, and it was reported to his parents. They, and the older children, assured him that the act was very, very wrong. He was not punished, nor was he given any further explanation of the mysteries of sex, but everything short of giving rational reasons was done to impress him with the serious wrongness and social disapproval of the act. His parents even made a point of praying with him for God's forgiveness of the act, which was very impressive as to how serious they thought it, for they had not done this for any of his other misdemeanors. This was all very puzzling to the child and completely failed to impress him with a sense of guilt for he could not see *why* the act was wrong. The solution at which he arrived, and which he presented in unavailing argument with his older playmates, was that the action could not really be "wicked" (i.e. morally wrong) because it did not hurt anybody, but that the heavy social disapproval must be merely because it was "very rude."

This case is very instructive. In the first place, it shows that social opposition and disapproval, however strong and

impressive, do not of themselves arouse the sense of guilt, even in a young child. The experience of the guilty conscience cannot therefore be a revival of emotions induced merely by social opposition and disapproval. Some other factor besides social opposition and disapproval must therefore be involved in creating the sense of guilt. In the second place, this case shows us what that factor is. The child would have felt a sense of guilt and have recognized his action as "wicked" (morally wrong) if he could have seen that it "hurt somebody," or, more broadly, that it was destructive of human welfare and unexcused by a balance of good results. In him the moral experience of conscience, or guilt, was attached to action seen to be destructive of values, but not to actions seen to be socially opposed and disapproved unless the opposition and disapproval were on the ground that the action was injurious to someone. He would, of course, like any other child, accept on authority the statement that certain actions were injurious. But he was not told that the sex act was injurious, only that it was wrong; and because he could not see it to be injurious and had not had the idea of its being injurious in any other way impressed upon him, there did not arise within him that inner constraint against the action which we call the guilty conscience.

Though most of us probably cannot remember from early childhood any such decisive instance as this of the distinction between conscience and social disapproval, yet the distinction is clearly present in adult thought. The basic ground on which every criticism of authoritarian and traditional morals rests is that of the little boy in our story: it cannot be wrong if it doesn't hurt anybody. The basic argument which every authoritarian uses in support of his principles is to show that to break them does hurt somebody. In the light of these facts, we can see what it is that tradition

and authority contribute to moral judgment. Sometimes they contribute the view that certain types of action are injurious to man, the reasons for this belief resting on experience, on error or hearsay, or on superstition. The conscience of those who accept this view from the authority then condemns those types of action. At other times the authority calls the attention of those who recognize it to the injurious nature of certain actions in cases where the interests of those persons would otherwise lead them to ignore or excuse the injury, so that conscience is called into operation where otherwise it would be silenced by opposing interests. In every case where critical thought examines the validity of the authoritative pronouncements, it proceeds to inquire as to whether the actions are really injurious, or whether the injury may not be justified by further good consequences, or whether ultimate consequences require that one should take notice of a wider or narrower range of persons affected for good or ill.

These facts therefore strongly indicate that conscience, basically, is not simply an effect of social conditioning. Social conditioning plays only the secondary role of helping to determine what actions shall be thought injurious or beneficial and whose injuries and benefits, and what extent of injuries and benefits, shall be taken into account and given attention. The basic feature of conscience is a general tendency of human nature, not dependent on any specific type of social conditioning, to feel a distinctive constraint against doing what is believed to be injurious to one's fellows, and a corresponding constraint in favor of what seems beneficial. The tendency to experience this constraint cannot itself be due to social conditioning, for, as we have seen, it does not vary concomitantly with the operation of social conditioning. It must therefore be attributed to something in the prenatal structure from which personality develops.

These considerations, taken together with the mass of evidence from the study of maldevelopments of personality, lead to the endorsement of Fromm's thesis that human nature is not entirely malleable, but that there is a "model" to which its development must needs conform if it is to avoid the self-stultification of inner conflict and realize the fullness of its potentialities. This model is the character type which Fromm calls "productive love," which early Christianity called "agape" and which is inadequately conveyed in such terms as "love of one's neighbor" and "brotherly love." The enlightened, critical conscience of man will be satisfied with nothing less.

The Choice of an Object of Devotion

The need of religion is therefore established, for "productive love" or "agape" is devotion to something beyond the self. The nature of the object of devotion is also largely clear. It must involve the ideal of the "universal," not merely a "socially immanent" ethic; it must aim at the true well-being of every person. The objective is therefore one regarded as supremely worthy of devotion. The only questions remaining concern (*a*) the means, in terms of physical action and social organization, whereby the welfare of humanity may best be promoted by those animated by productive, or brotherly, love, and (*b*) the means by which such love can be inculcated and maintained in oneself and in others. The answer to the first question is to be found in making the best possible use of the natural and social sciences. The answer to the second is the distinctively religious problem. The most important element in this question, for those of us who have grown up under the influence of the Hebrew-Christian tradition, is whether theism or humanism provides the best discipline of the

moral life—and the question, of course, is not independent of problems concerning the intellectual credibility of the two points of view. In terms of the great and familiar text, it is the question whether or not man can best succeed in loving his neighbor as himself if he also has the faith which enables him to love the Lord his God with all his heart.

This question, unfortunately, is not one which can be answered by a statistical study of personality tests of representatives of the two forms of belief. Our society is so permeated by theistic belief that no one escapes its influence on his ideals and attitudes. Members of humanist religious groups are of two kinds, (*a*) the small coteries of intellectuals who have rejected traditional theism on intellectual grounds but seek to retain and improve its ethical values, and (*b*) groups which have rejected both traditional theism and its ethics in devotion to some sectional goal or specific program, such as the Nazis and Communists. Outside of these groups is a large group who have lost their theistic belief and its moral idealism without developing any form of nontheistic religion. Yet all of these have been subjected to the influence of religious ideals. There is no way of sampling these groups that we could feel sure would give a representative sample of the moral effect of absence of theistic beliefs. Further, theistic beliefs are so varied, and so mingled with other factors, that no way of sampling them could assure us of a representative sample of the effect of holding to theism. The method of studying statistical samples is therefore futile. Still more futile is that of arguing from particular examples of very good men and very bad men as to the influence of their particular type of belief. There are outstanding examples to support any view, but in every case the factors are much too complex to assume offhandedly that it is the belief that is the decisive influence in shaping character.

Humanistic criticisms of theism have made great use of the historical argument to show that theism tends to become authoritarian and have stressed the evils resulting from a combination of supernaturalism and authoritarianism. On the other side, it should be pointed out that the largest, most vigorous and powerful nontheistic religious groups are also totalitarian, namely the Communist movement and the Nazi movement, the latter of which required a world war to repress it. Further, these nontheistic totalitarian religions have arisen in the full light of modern science, whereas the authoritarianism of theistic religion depends on supernaturalism and tends to give way to nonauthoritarian forms of faith under scientific and historical criticism. The historical argument concerning the tendency to authoritarianism in religion therefore cannot be used to support humanism against theism. It can be used to support secularism against any form of religion, but it is there met by a counterargument showing the tendency of social order to disintegrate if it lacks a religion which can really grip the minds of its people and give unity to their purposive life.[12]

In the past, it must be admitted, this has been most successfully achieved by theistic religions with a magical and miraculous content in their theology. It may be that this will always be the case with the mass of mankind, but it is certain that the influence of such religion upon the most intelligent and educated section of the community is declining and must continue to decline, and there is no obvious reason why the minds of the masses should not also eventually be emancipated and directed to acceptance of enlightened religious views, either theistic or humanistic.

In our present critical examination of humanism, this

[12] See A. C. Garnett, *God in Us* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1945), chap. i.

raises the question of the satisfactoriness of its intellectual content. This the Humanists have been inclined to regard as the strongest element in their position, for they are ready to accept without question the established results of the natural sciences. However, humanism as a religious faith must go beyond anything that science has proved. In its rejection of theism it must hold that organic life must have emerged from the inorganic in a world devoid of any conscious purpose as high as that of the human. This does not involve the holding of any specific metaphysical theory, but it does involve the holding of a faith that some metaphysical theory of a nontheistic type, perhaps as yet unframed, would constitute an adequate explanation of the facts, and *that such a metaphysical theory need not conflict with humanism's faith in the supreme importance of moral values and the attainability of its ethical goals.*

The difficulty of framing any such theory without making assumptions of a completely nonscientific character, such as a theory of emergence, or a doctrine of essences, is notorious. I shall not press this point further here, for it would take us too far into the intricacies of metaphysics, and I have dealt with the problems elsewhere.[13] It is sufficient for our present purposes to recognize that humanism does not escape these intellectual problems, and that, as we shall see, the faith of theism need not involve itself in difficulties that are any greater.

The Motivation of Humanist Religion

We come then to the crux of the problem. Why is it that, among the multitude of people who, for intellectual reasons, reject the metaphysical assumptions of theism, so

[13] See *Reality and Value* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937); *A Realistic Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1942); and *God in Us* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1945).

few are found to adhere to a religious humanism other than those of a narrow and totalitarian type? Is it that democratic humanism fails, with the majority, to solve the problem of an ethical discipline—to relate its ethical ideals to the sources of human motivation so as to draw out the appropriate moral response? A democratic religious humanism must be able to touch the sources of human motivation and direct them in the attitude of productive love to the goal of a universal ethic, the welfare of humanity; and that attitude of productive love must be made so strong that its goal will be recognized as supremely worthy of devotion even if the character of the individual is too weak to be able consistently to maintain the attitude of productive love in practice. Such is religion. It maintains its faith in the object of devotion even in spite of failures in the effort to serve it; and the faith gradually strengthens the character against failure. Can humanism create such faith in the weak as well as the strong, and make it widespread in society?

Humanism can and does use most of the methods of theistic religion—precept and example expressed in speech, literature, poetry and ritual, music and silent meditation, and the organized practice of good works. But if thoughtful adults are to be induced to the disciplinary influence of these media by which attitudes are inculcated they must first be shown a reason for doing so. They must first be won to approve of the goal. This involves the statement of a philosophy. The other measures used in religious organizations are therefore limited to two functions. (*a*) They may induce the religious attitude in youth who, following a leadership of their elders, submit to them and spontaneously adopt the suggested goal as a result of this social conditioning. (*b*) They serve to keep alive and increase devotion to the goal on the part of those who have

already adopted it. They cannot, however, give to the inquiring mind a reason why the goal they present should be adopted. That can only be done by teaching a philosophy which gives the individual reasons why he should subordinate his other interests to an interest in the welfare of mankind.

It is just here that a psychological analysis such as that of Erich Fromm assumes its importance for humanism. It supplies that which the humanism of the Ethical Culture Society in London, under the leadership of Stanton Coit, sought in the implausible doctrine of essences of Nicolai Hartmann, and that which American humanism has for the most part lacked, because it has taken its philosophy from American naturalism, and particularly from the secularistic instrumentalism of John Dewey. Fromm's defense of the Spinozistic concept of a "model of human nature," soundly based in empirical psychology, shows that the way to true happiness for the individual lies precisely in his capacity to subordinate his other interests to those involved in the attitude of "productive love" and loyalty to the humanistic, critical conscience. Thus humanism has a solution to its basic problem of an ethical discipline; it can make the connection between the sources of human motivation and its ethical ideal by pointing out that devotion to that ideal is the true way to individual happiness.

Thus religious humanism can be given a defense which appeals soundly to human reason. It can function as a religion without relying for support on only those who have uncritically accepted its ideal from their leaders or have adopted that ideal under other influences before entering its fellowship. However, it can never be a religion for the multitude, for its way of making the rational connection between the ideal and the sources of motivation is a hard and a dangerous way.

The Limitations of Humanism

It is a hard way, in the first place, because its argument is not easy to grasp; it appears to contradict common sense. People naturally assume that the way to happiness is through the satisfaction of their desires—as they are—and especially their strongest desires. They regard most other people as rivals for the means to the pursuit of happiness —the satisfaction of desires. Conscience appears at best as a warning concerning unsafe ways to pursue satisfaction, and more commonly as a barrier to taking the shortest and easiest way. It is not easy to see the fallacy in the pursuit of happiness—that it comes to us only when we pursue something else. It is not easy to see the truth of the paradox that to enjoy oneself one must forget oneself, that to love others as oneself is not being false to one's own self, but being true to it. It is not easy to see that there is nothing in the long run more precious than the integrity of one's own conscience. These things are not easy to see, and they are harder still to remember at precisely those moments when most we need to remember them.

Not only is the argument hard to grasp, but its implications are harder still to put into practice. It implies that what we need is to love something beyond ourselves, something we regard as supremely worthy of love. The argument tells us that for the sake of the love of ourselves we must love something beyond ourselves. But love cannot be simply commanded by the will. Many a woman has tried to love a rich man for the sake of her own happiness, but the attempt is usually a dismal failure. The deliberate cultivation of love is not impossible, but it is extremely difficult. Such cultivation is simply an example of the familiar development whereby something undertaken merely as means to a further end comes, in course of time, to be a matter of absorbing interest for its own sake. A man who goes into a

certain line of business simply for the sake of making money may at first find his work a bore, but later he may grow interested in it for its own sake. A woman with a sufficient family of her own who, purely out of a sense of duty, undertakes the raising of an orphan left by her sister, will probably grow to love the sister's child as much as her own. There is no doubt that love is best cultivated by doing the deeds of love, and therefore it is not impossible to grow to love one's neighbors as oneself by undertaking the activities of "productive love," even though the motive for such action was originally only a recognition that this is the best way to one's own happiness.

However, the cultivation of love for one's neighbors in this way is extremely difficult if the neighbors are not responsive, if one cannot actually see valuable effects growing from one's work, and if the "neighbors" are distant and strange. It is true, as Fromm says, that "to love one person productively is to be related to the human core," [14] and this contains the roots of a universal ethic. But there is no spontaneous transfer from productive love of one person to productive love of all persons. The activities of a productive character undertaken as a result of a realization that in such activities lies the way to true happiness tend, therefore, to create an attitude of productive love only toward the specific individuals, groups, programs, and policies toward which they are directed and in which they meet a satisfying measure of success. This, however, falls far short of cultivating an attitude in accord with a universal ethic.

The person, therefore, who, for the sake of his own true happiness, tries to create in himself an attitude of universalized productive love finds the task extremely difficult. Such success as he has depends almost entirely on his spontaneous natural and habitual interest in human beings finding positive, interesting, and sufficiently successful expression in

[14] *Man for Himself* (*op. cit.*), p. 101.

various channels of activity which he can see to have social value. His reasoned recognition that in such activity is the way to true happiness probably serves to help him guard against the mistake of giving up too easily when results are disappointing, or of letting himself be distracted by egoistic goals. Beyond that it is of little significance.

Those who find humanism sufficient as a religion are therefore the fortunate individuals whose characters need little aid from religion in order to make a satisfactory social adjustment. It is not a religion in which sinners can find the salvation of their souls, but merely one in which good people can find encouragement. Neither is it a religion that can lift a man to the pinnacles of high devotion, except to some concrete and specific cause in which his special interests have become absorbed. It contains nothing that gives it power to lift the soul out of concern with the particular to devotion to the universal, to man as man, and to man as brother, as kindred soul, whatever be the barriers of earthly circumstance. Its connection with the universal ideal beyond the self is indirect, through pure, cool, and enlightened concern for self. It has no means of striking a spark to light directly the flame of devotion to the universal human beyond the self. It must try to reach the universal indirectly. It must rely on a flame of devotion to some particular human group or cause and strive by argument to spread it to the universal—the argument being that thus to spread it is better for oneself. It therefore has little success except with those whose humanitarian habits are so well ingrained by training, and whose problems of adjustment to conscience are so simple, that they have little need of it.

The Dangers of Humanism

The approach of Humanist religion to the problem of creating a devotion in accord with the universal ethic is

therefore largely futile. It also contains two subtle dangers. The first of these lies in its dependence upon the creation of a primary devotion to particular human groups and causes. It cannot begin, as Auguste Comte thought it could, with a devotion to humanity. Humanity, as an object of devotion, is a highly abstract concept. It is not even an organized group with distinctive marks and symbols, such as a nation. The race of human beings, in the concrete, is not a unity, but a diversity shot through with conflicts. What we call devotion to humanity is always devotion to a particular concept of what human beings can be and should be, and of how they need to be organized in order to realize this ideal. Without such definite form it is merely an amorphous feeling, without power or direction.

The devotion of a Humanist religion therefore tends, in so far as it becomes effective, to be a devotion to a particular political program. The more definite the program and its leadership the more powerful it can become. That is why communism and naziism have proved to be the most vigorous forms of Humanist religion. Democratic humanism is weak because democracy is, by its very nature, indefinite and divided in its political program. Apart from its weakness, however, even democratic humanism contains a danger. When enthusiasm for a particular political program (whether on the national scale or in some minor institution) attains the fervor of religious devotion, but is not guided and checked by being primarily and directly a devotion to the *universal human*, it becomes a fanaticism, an idolatry. This, of course, is exactly what happened in communism and naziism, and also among the terrorist extremists of Zionism. It can also happen among theists who are false to their theism in allowing devotion to a particular church to take precedence in their minds over devotion to God. The Humanist type of religion, however, is especially

open to this danger of devotion to a particular program or organization taking precedence over the universal, for it has no direct means of striking the spark of spontaneous devotion to the universal and must work toward it from initial devotion to particular programs. If it creates a genuinely religious devotion to a particular policy without successfully subordinating it to the universal, it creates an idolatry.

The second danger in the Humanist type of religion lies in its appeal to self-love as the ultimate rational ground for universal brotherly love. It is, of course, well for people to know the true psychology of the sources of happiness. It helps to give them confidence in letting themselves go in self-forgetting devotion to a sound religious objective. And the term "self-forgetting," of course, must not be taken too literally. It means that, relative to its usual prominence, self loses its place in the picture—that one's own desires and needs are recognized as no more important than those of other people, even though they must be more directly one's own concern and responsibility. Yet there is something paradoxical in the effort to cultivate an attitude of concern for the welfare of others equal to one's concern for oneself by constantly reminding oneself that the development of such concern for others is a necessary condition of fulfilling the concern for oneself. The promotion of the welfare of others is then still the means to one's own welfare. It may, by persistent attention, become an object of interest for its own sake, but this development, as we have seen, is difficult and slow. It is also fraught with the danger of cultivating spiritual pride and the love of power. If the ultimate reason for the doing of good works is promotion of one's own spiritual well-being, then the good works tend to become a means for the creation of a gratifyingly virtuous appearance of the self; and possession of the power to do the good works oneself becomes a goal more important than the objective

that they should be well done—perhaps by someone who can do them better.

At this point Erich Fromm's analysis of the place of "self-love" in "productive love" is defective, as indicated by his approving quotation from Nietzsche in his discussion of conscience: conscience is said to be "the ability to guarantee oneself with all due pride, and also at the same time to say yes to oneself." [15] His argument urges love of others because this is not an alternative to, but a means to, the objectives of true self-love. This suggests that, for rational conduct, self-love still has the primacy. In that direction, however, lies the danger of introversion and spiritual pride. If personality is to be wholesome, primacy must remain with devotion to an object beyond the self. Care for oneself —for one's physical, mental and social needs and capacities—must remain incidental to the fulfillment of interest in worth-while external objects. To fulfill such worthy interests—to solve the mysteries of nature, produce works of art, create a better social order, or promote the kingdom of God—a man must nourish himself, husband his resources, cultivate his abilities, develop a well-rounded personality, stand up for his own rights, and thus in general promote his own well-being. And in all this there will be a place for sheer relaxation and enjoyment of pleasure. All this may, in Fromm's sense of the term, be called self-love. But its place among the goals of life must remain secondary if the danger of introversion is to be avoided. The good man, with a wholesome personality, is one who cares for himself, but he does so *in order that* he may most successfully do those things in the objective world upon which his heart is most set—things which he sees as having a place in the totality of human good and being his own best possible contribution to it.

[15] See page 67.

This wholesome attitude is spoiled if, to turn attention to universal human welfare, a person must first remind himself that such a form of attention is really best for the proper development of his own personality. In doing that a man makes the proper development of self his ultimate goal. His activities directed toward broad human welfare are seen as means to his own self-realization. The realization of the self as a moral, self-respecting, and respected personality must become the prime interest; and in it will be the principal sense of achievement. Inevitably the love of his fellow men takes second place to spiritual pride and the love of power. This is the danger which besets every effort to promote one's own moral well-being. As we have seen, it can manifest itself in a secularist outlook. In theism, it is a danger of which theologians are well aware. But it is, I fear, a danger to which the humanist outlook must be particularly prone, because humanism emphasizes the supreme importance of moral values, requires the individual to cultivate them in himself, and yet does not call forth a devotion to anything conceived as higher than the self in which they are cultivated. Humanism calls on man to do justly, and to love mercy, but not to walk humbly with his God.

When spiritual pride is allied with devotion to a particular program, policy, or party, conceived as the best mode of organizing the lives of human beings for their own good, then the really dangerous fanatic is born. These are the factors that produce the man who, out of high principle, is capable of guillotining an aristocracy, liquidating a class of kulaks, or betraying the atomic secrets of his country. It is not without significance that these things have been done in the cause of humanistic religions. Yet it would, of course, be as foolish to suggest that all humanistic religions must tend to produce this sort of danger as it would be to suggest that all theism must tend to produce the sort of fanaticism

manifested in the Spanish inquisition and the New England burning of witches. Contemporary American democratic humanism, in its devotion to "liberty, equality and fraternity," is as far from the excesses of the French revolution as contemporary American Catholics are from those of the inquisitors in Spain. Yet, if we would understand the effects of different types of religious outlook on the moral life, the lessons of history must not be forgotten.

We may, therefore, sum up our conclusions regarding religious humanism as follows. Like every other religion, it must be accepted, if at all, on faith. Yet it is an intelligible and defensible religious position and can be an encouragement and aid in the moral life. It is of least help, however, to those who need religion most. It is not likely to be found satisfactory except by those whose intelligence is relatively high and whose habits are already set in a generous and humanitarian mold. It can never be a great religion in the sense of stimulating and lifting the spiritual life of the multitude. It is not likely to produce many examples of high devotion except in those forms, such as communism, where the object of devotion has become a very specific political program. Though it avoids the dangers of superstition associated with supernaturalism it is not devoid of its own peculiar dangers. It can be turned to the support of totalitarianism without inner contradiction if one is convinced that therein lies the greatest promise of human good.

The deficiencies of humanism at its best can be summed up in these two points. (1) It calls for devotion to an object that cannot spontaneously *win* devotion—Humanity, vague and unreal as an ideal, bitterly divided and often forbidding, vicious and disappointing in concrete reality. When our hearts fail to respond in love to this object, humanism has to turn us inward upon ourselves to consider that for the realization of our own best selves we must do so; thus

the ideal of the self slips into the place of the object of supreme devotion and religion is undermined by spiritual pride. (2) The ideal of the ethical life falls short of the call to full devotion. To love one's neighbor as oneself still calls, as Fromm says, for equal consideration of oneself. There is no power here, therefore, to call a man completely out of himself so that the self ceases to be an *ultimate* end and becomes instead something we care for only as a means, a vital instrument, for achievement of the objective tasks on which our hearts are set. To attain this standpoint, with impartiality and universality, there must be a love which is above the love of self and neighbor, though these may be made equal. There must be a love that can absorb the *whole* heart, the *whole* life and strength, a love one can live and die for. And it must be the love of an object the love of which will still keep man true to both himself and his neighbor. Such a love can only be found in the love of a God who is beyond and above both self and neighbor—beyond humanity, yet eternal lover of humanity.

Chapter 5

THE FAITH OF THEISM

The God Man Needs

It is clear from our analysis thus far that man's religious need is not that of a God to serve him, but of a God to serve—an object of devotion that he can love with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might. For it is in love, productive love, that the human spirits finds its fulfillment. We can also list the characteristics which that object of devotion, man's God, must have if his service of it is to fulfill his need.

In the first place, it must be an object beyond (other than) himself, so that he may be drawn out of himself, extroverted by his devotion to it.

In the second place, it must be regarded as supremely worthy of devotion, so that it can serve to systematize and integrate his system of values and interests. It must give him a standard whereby to judge other objects of interest, so that he can fit them into place, and by devotion to the supremely worthy object avoid conflict within his own soul.

Thirdly, it must be able to engage the whole of his personality, so that in its service he may be led to live a full life and develop a well-integrated personality.

Fourthly, it must clearly imply the universalistic ethic in which all men, without arbitrary distinction, favoritism, or prejudice, are recognized as among those whom a man should love as he loves himself—with productive love. It

must serve to present all men in a light which shows arbitrary distinctions to be irrational. It must thus serve to dispel prejudice and favoritism and stimulate interest in the welfare of man as man.

Fifthly, it must have power to draw out his interest and love spontaneously and directly, not merely as a means to self-satisfaction or some other goal, and not merely as a duty.

Sixthly, it must be something more than an abstract idea, for few can develop a very strong interest in an idea the basis for which is not somehow clearly given in lived experience. At the same time, its meaning must go far beyond what is immediately given or it could not call for action to realize it. The grasp of this meaning will involve both reason and faith. The relation of these two factors will have to be further studied, but the point for present emphasis is that the object of devotion must appear to man as a concrete reality, i.e., as something in some way, and to some extent, given in immediate experience.

Seventh, it must induce attention to the fulfilling of a man's own moral responsibilities and the maintenance of his inner integrity without encouraging spiritual pride, the "holier than thou" attitude, and the consequent pursuit of power to enforce his own conceptions of righteousness on others. It must rather induce the spirit of humility and honest self-criticism.

It will readily be seen that the theistic conception of a personal God fulfills the first four of these requirements. The God of theism is both immanent and transcendent, operating in man and nature but also transcending both, and is thus an object extending far beyond the self, though also, in some way, found within. He is always conceived as supremely worthy, perfect in goodness and wisdom, and the ultimate source of all good in human experience. In the

concept of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man the third and fourth requirements are also fulfilled. Devotion to a God who loves all His children implies that the devotee also must love all God's children. Furthermore, the fact that the other man is a child of God, whom God must love as he loves us, gives to the meanest specimen of humanity a significance that demands attention to his rights and needs. It far outweighs any distinctions based on race or culture. And in the service of God and our fellow men thus required there is opportunity for the full exercise of all the powers of personality.

It is not quite so obvious, however, that the personal God of theism fulfills the fifth, sixth, and seventh requirements, particularly the fifth and sixth. How can the concept of such a Being call forth a spontaneous expression of love and devotion? Is not the concept of God a most distant and intangible abstraction, a product of discursive thought, not of the immediacy of experience? Is it not something that appears as anything but a concrete reality? Does the idea of serving such a Being really make us humble, or may it not tend to make us proud?

Rationalism and Wishful Thinking

The answers to these questions require us to look deep into the roots of theistic faith in the human soul. When we do so it soon becomes clear that the basis of belief cannot be purely, or mainly, intellectual. The three traditional arguments for the existence of God are the ontological, the cosmological, and the teleological. The first is purely rationalistic, or logical. It argues that the very idea of a perfect being implies that such a being exists. We need not examine the argument here. Very few people have found it convincing. It was not thought of until the eleventh cen-

tury A.D. It has certainly never been the actual basis of theistic belief for any but a very few philosophers.

The other two arguments are empirical and are widely accepted as sound. They argue from the common-sense concept of causation that our universe must have been produced or ordered by a Being of overwhelming power, intelligence, and goodness. It is clear, however, that the theistic conclusion of these arguments is only one of several hypotheses consistent with the facts and the common-sense notion of causal agency. Other plausible hypotheses, widely accepted, have rejected monotheism. Some have postulated a world with many gods, or rival good and evil powers, or a system of natural laws uncontrolled by any purposive agency.

Even those who have felt logically impelled to postulate some purposive agency, finite or infinite, are not, as David Hume so clearly showed,[1] driven by the facts to postulate that that agency must be morally good. Natural forces produce such a mixture of good and evil, and distribute their favors and their blows with so little relation to moral desert, that it is quite plausible to regard them as nonmoral, even if intelligent. It is clear, therefore, that the theistic belief in the existence of a *moral* power above the human, supremely worthy of man's devotion, does not arise primarily from a purely, or chiefly, intellectual consideration of the mixture of order and disorder in nature. The more or less logical arguments presented in support of theism are afterthoughts, advanced to give intellectual support to beliefs arrived at in some other way.

It is often suggested that this is the way of wishful thinking, and it must be admitted that wishful thinking, as well as purely intellectual arguments, has entered into the com-

[1] See his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. Kemp Smith (London: Oxford University Press, 1935).

plex structures of thought developed in the various types of theology. If, by the terms "religious beliefs and practices," we mean everything that involves appeal to the mystical or supernatural, then there is certainly much that comes under that rubric that is motivated by both wishful thinking and *un*enlightened self-interest. It is not wishful thinking, however, that has created the fundamental concept of God as a *moral* power beyond ourselves and beyond society, requiring man's adherence to a moral law which he is often reluctant to obey. Wishful thinking may have led the Hebrews to believe that they were Yahweh's chosen people, but it was not wishful thinking that created the Old Testament picture of the stern and implacable lawgiver visiting his people with famine, sword, and pestilence for their disobedient ways. Nor is it usually wishful thinking that brings about a return to faith on the part of the modern intellectual who has first lost his faith by discovery that the theistic arguments are inconclusive or unsound and the traditional concept of God untenable. Indeed, wishful thinking contributes at least as often to the loss as to the restoration of belief.

What we are concerned to understand is the element of *devotion*, of love and loyal service, that is found at the core of religious beliefs and practices. This element is found even in the religion of primitives, as shown by the researches of Malinowski, Marett,[2] and many other anthropologists. It involves the recognition of a god who is good and just, at least to those who acknowledge and serve him. The marvel is that this faith in the goodness and justice of a god that is identified with any or all of the forces of nature, or believed to control them, can persist in the face of the

[2] See B. Malinowski, *Foundations of Faith and Morals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936); and R. R. Marett, *Faith, Hope, and Charity in Primitive Religion* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932).

capriciousness of all natural forces. It is clear that man believes in the moral qualities of such gods in spite of the evidence.

This belief, therefore, cannot be one that begins with a pseudorational personalization of natural forces and responds with love and service for what they actually do for the believer. The belief in a moral power beyond the self and beyond the tribe must arise independently of such pseudorational considerations and become subsequently identified with forces of nature. How this may be understood to happen we will explain later, but the point to be emphasized here is that the faith in an unseen god (or God) who is worthy of man's devotion is not dependent upon speculations concerning purposive agency in the control of nature. These speculations account for the approaches to the deity motivated by the desire for material aid. They do not account for the faith in a moral being supremely worthy of man's most loyal service.

The Mystical and the Emotional in Religious Experience

The attempt to explain religious faith as due to a supernaturalism originating entirely in primitive speculation on the forces of nature, and an attempt to appease or appeal to those forces, has failed, as is widely recognized today. The alternative is to recognize that the real root of religion is in an experience which is more intimately subjective than that of sense perception. Early in the nineteenth century, Schleiermacher[3] suggested that the unique element in religious experience is a sense of "absolute dependence." Man, he says, finds himself in reciprocal relations of mutual

[3] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Speeches on Religion to Its Cultured Despisers*, trans. John Oman (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1893).

dependence upon human society and the physical world. But, as a finite being in a world of finite things, he finds himself and all his world contingent, dependent upon an Infinite beyond himself and the world. This dependence is primarily felt rather than thought. It is, he said, unique and pure feeling in its immediacy, its content being neither rational nor moral. "God" is thus the name merely of *that whence* the feeling of dependence comes, and the feeling tells us nothing of either the goodness or the power of that on which we thus feel ourselves to depend.

The obvious defect of this analysis of basic religious experience is that it is too completely subjective. What is experienced, we are told, carries with it no indication of the nature of that whence the experience comes except the very dubious indication of its infinity. One cannot make an object of devotion of bare infinity, even if one spells it with a capital I. To become an object supremely worthy of devotion the Infinite must be filled with meaning, and in place of real meaning Schleiermacher only offered myth. But religious myths have power to stir devotion only when they are believed to portray deep truths about a real being. When Schleiermacher emptied the myths of truth, he emptied them of power. Further, since he found in the religious feeling nothing to suggest the existence of a real object supremely worthy of devotion, the feeling he points to fails to explain the fact that the essential and living core of the religious response consists in such devotion.

Early in the present century theological circles became excited over another attempt to point to the roots of religious faith in a distinctive type of experience. Rudolph Otto, in *The Idea of the Holy*,[4] propounded the thesis that religious experience is neither aesthetic, moral, nor rational. It is an objective quality of mystery found in the contem-

[4] Trans. J. W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1925).

plation of reality, a sense of mystery which inspires feelings of awe and holds us fascinated. Otto produces evidence of this type of experience from all types of religion. It is strongest in the primitive. He calls it the sense of the numinous. It is, he says, in some inscrutable, a priori manner associated with moral intuitions, and this union of the mystical and the moral is essential to religion. In primitive religion the nonrational experience of the numinous predominates over the moral, but the association with the moral is always there if the experience be religious. Without it the mystery would be merely magical. As we rise in the scale of civilization, and religion becomes more rational, the moral element comes to the fore and the sense of the numinous becomes less prominent. If it should disappear, however, the experience would cease to be religious. Moral intuition would be left without its religious dynamic.

Whatever objections one may raise to Otto's reference to a priori intuitions, it must be admitted that both he and Schleiermacher have done service in insisting that an element in experience that may well be called mystical, and is vibrant with emotional overtones, is vital in formation of the religious attitude. Otto is also correct, as the abundant evidence of his argument shows, in insisting on the essential importance of the moral element. But he has so sharply distinguished the moral experience as resting on rational intuition and the mystical element as nonrational that he can find no relation between them. He cannot explain how they come to characterize the one object of thought and make it an object of religious devotion. He therefore has to assume that the connection is a priori.

His difficulty, we may suggest, is that he has made the moral element in man's life too rational and the mystical element completely nonrational. It is the latter mistake that is the more serious. Otto has drawn too heavily on

the primitive for his understanding of religion. He forgets, as anthropologists so often do, that what we call primitive religion is the product of a long period of evolution in minds where magical suggestions are almost unchecked by rational criticism. The heavy overlay of magic in primitive religion almost smothers the moral element and makes its mysticism appear basically nonmoral and nonrational. But we have no right to assume that religion in its beginnings bore any great resemblance to the elaborate magical systems of primitives. Still less should we assume that the mystical experience which appears to us to be characteristic of primitives, and which we can occasionally find in our own experience isolated from the moral, constitutes the essential and original type of religious mysticism.

The Moral and the Mystical in Religious Experience

The attempts to show how religion could begin with purely rational ideas or with purely mystical experience have failed. There is no transition from the purely rational or purely mystical to the moral. There is, however, a transition from moral experience, when the moral issue is faced in its intensity and height and depth, to both the rational and the mystical elements in religion. It was Immanuel Kant's great contribution to religious and philosophical thought to have decisively called attention to the experience of the ethical imperative as both the actual basis of religious faith and the best starting point for its logical justification. This same thesis has also been most cogently argued in the present century by the distinguished Scottish theologian, John Baillie.[5] Both Kant and Baillie make strong claims (probably too strong) for the significance of the moral

[5] John Baillie, *The Interpretation of Religion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928).

argument for the existence of God. Baillie, however, very wisely, lays primary emphasis on the argument that the moral experience is the *actual* source of faith in a personal God, whether or not it may also constitute a logical ground for such a belief.

Empirical studies of the psychology of religion strongly support this claim for the primacy of the moral experience in the generation of religious faith. This was the conclusion of the pioneer work in this field done by William James [6] at the beginning of the present century. It has been abundantly borne out by later investigations. All these studies show that the experience called "conversion"—in which a person not consciously seeking to live a life of devotion to God finds himself drawn into a new attitude in which he does consciously, and to some extent successfully, make that effort—is one in which the individual is aware of a conflict within himself between what he regards as right and wrong desires or purposes. In that conflict he feels his own passions and self-interest on the one side and on the other a constraining sense of duty, supported perhaps by some relatively weak, long-range or altruistic interests. The struggle may be mild or severe, but it is characteristic of the sense of duty that it will not accept denial. It opposes our own will like an alien power and condemns us when we violate it. Yet when we accept its verdict and surrender to it we feel not merely that this decision is free and has given us a firmer grip upon ourselves, but that the self is unified within and in harmony with what is most ultimate and real in the meaning of life. This experience James found his subjects tended to describe as one of "making proper connection with the higher powers.[7]

[6] William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., Inc., 1902). [7] *Ibid.*, p. 508.

Here then is mysticism directly linked with the moral experience in its most significant phase. Not only is it a mystical interpretation of experience, in that the resolution of the conflict is attributed to a contact with higher powers, but the experience appears as, in itself, mystical. For mysticism is the view that man can have a direct experience of a reality other than that he experiences in and through his senses. In this sense, the sense of duty, in so far as it is objective, has the character of the mystical. For when man feels a moral constraint placed upon himself, he feels it as the pressure of something other than himself, and yet not in any way sensory or physical. In part he may feel it as pressure of the demands of other human beings, but in so far as it is genuinely felt as moral, it is more than mere social pressure. It is a pressure recognized as that of a rule of right that presses equally upon himself and other human beings.

In this analysis of the experience in which the typical religious commitment takes root the contemporary psychology of religion is at one with evangelical theology and the teaching of the New Testament. The Spirit of God, we are there told, convicts men of sin, and through this conviction and repentance men find God. Men *find* God. They do not merely come to believe in the existence of something represented by an abstract idea. They find God, says Christian thought, voicing Christian experience, as One who comes seeking them. But man does not go readily and willingly seeking God, or creating pleasant images of Him. His first thought of being found by God is one of awe, mingled with fear. For *the God he has found seeking him is the embodiment of the moral law.* The experience is that so graphically described in Francis Thompson's poem "The Hound of Heaven."

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
  Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.

. . .

(For though I knew His love Who followed,
  Yet was I sore adread
Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside).

. . .

  Still with unhurrying chase,
  And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
  Came on the following Feet,
  And a Voice above their beat—
"Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me."

It is the picture of a man flying from his conscience. Be it the traditional or critical conscience, it is that which seems to him right and good. Yet he flies from it "sore adread" lest, should he shelter and cherish it, he should have naught beside. For conscience comes to a man demanding that he give up things that he wants, that he do things he considers a burden or a danger. No wonder he fights it, flies from it, tries to ignore it. Sometimes he succeeds in doing so, but only at the cost of repressions that hound him and haunt him the more from the subterranean depths of the unconscious. Sometimes he rationalizes and cultivates an insensitivity to it that leaves him living on a lower plane. Sometimes he acknowledges it, gives it shelter, and cherishes it; and then he must serve it. But the service which seemed to promise nothing but sacrifice discloses itself to be a new joy. He finds that he has surrendered to a power that can lift him to new heights, give life new meaning, fill him with new strength and inward peace.

The Leap of Faith

It is from this experience that the faith of theism arises. The power that condemned has been found to be a friend. It had pressed upon the self as something alien but inescapable, opposing and condemning, yet in surrender to it has been found an unexpected peace, strength, and joy. Here is the deepest mystery of life to ponder. Can it be that in this experience life finds not only its deepest fulfillment, but also the secret of its ultimate meaning? The plodding reason, seeking from the evidence of the senses an answer to the question, "Whence does man come, and why?" finds no response. The kind of reality revealed by the senses does not speak of ultimate origin or purpose. Nor can reason deduce an answer from this other reality faced in our moments of conscientious struggle and decision. Yet nothing in all experience is more real, more vital, more important, more fraught with meaning—though a meaning to be guessed at rather than read.

With its feet planted firmly on the reality of the inward struggle and decision, faith takes its leap, and from its own new vantage point it catches its vision. The voice that has pursued, persuaded, and condemned is not our own, nor the voice of society. It is the voice of that which is common to all men, for all men hear it. It comes from the ultimate roots of our being, the Source of life whence we are sprung; and it speaks of the goal of life which we must serve or miss our destiny, the goal in which alone we can realize the best that is in us. It is an other and higher Will than ours, that seeks in and through each of us the good of all. Herein is the meaning of life revealed. It is the meaning of the universe—that the life of man is drawn from a larger Life, the life of One who makes His will felt in ours, a will that calls us to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with Him, our God.

This answer is the theistic vision, an act of faith. It takes the vivid, lived experience of conscience, a power with which man wrestles and from which he strives to escape, a reality that is personal and immanent, and it interprets this reality as not only immanent but, while still personal, also transcendent. Thus it finds within the most intimate recesses of the self the impression of something greater beyond us. The idea of God is the interpretation of a lived impression, as the idea of the sun is the interpretation of the light in our eyes, and the idea of the rock is the interpretation of the pressure on our hands. Thus God is seen not as an abstraction, a hypothetical entity invented as the indirect cause of immediate experience. He is a concrete object of immediate experience. He is also thoroughly objective, for the experience of conscience is common to all normal human beings and theism says it is the one God who makes Himself felt by all of us.

Of course, it is possible that the theistic interpretation of this experience is mistaken, just as we know that the interpretations of the appearance of sun and rock developed by unscientific common sense are mistaken. The latter interpretations, however, refer to their measurable features, which are subject to check and calculation. Most of the ideational content in the idea of God (the interpretation of our experience of conscience) is not subject to check. It must remain held, if at all, as an act of faith, justified, in the only way an act of faith can be justified, by the values that flow from it.

At some points, however, the theistic idea can be checked, and one of the most important modifications of the traditional view is involved in what has already been said about conscience. The traditional element in it is clearly of human, social origin and cannot be attributed directly to God. It is the critical, or humanistic conscience,

which simply demands of us an impartial concern for the welfare of all, that is the root of all conscience; and it is this, and this alone, that can reasonably be attributed to the influence within us of the moral power of the universe. The confusion of the traditional with the basic critical element in conscience has been the source of tragic error and dogmatism. It has brought about a tremendous reaction of scepticism and has also led many theologians to fail to appreciate the nature of the immanence of God in man. With the correction of this error the way is open for a purer and stronger theism, free from dogmatism and the implications that have made so many honest and earnest thinkers feel they cannot accept it.

The Primacy of Love

Another error which has vitiated theological efforts to understand the immance of God in man is to be found in the Greek psychology of voluntary action. The Greeks believed that voluntary behavior is controlled by reason, all other action being directed by the appetites and passion. They also believed that all rational conduct is self-regarding, i.e., it makes the well-being of the self its end. This is the reason why benevolence never appears in the list of Greek virtues. Like other human beings, they frequently practiced benevolence and appreciated it, but to their philosophers an act of benevolence which involved self-sacrifice always appeared irrational and therefore not genuinely virtuous. The Epicureans, with their hedonistic psychology, declared, "No one loves another save in his own interest." The Stoics praised impartiality and urged the giving of help where it was needed, but insisted that the motive must be conformity with the universal reason, not love or compassion. Plato defended justice (or righteousness) as the true

"health of the soul," and therefore as the proper objective of the rational man. Aristotle regarded the moral virtues as habits of moderation in control of the appetites and passions, such as to constitute a sound basis for that cultivation of the intellect wherein lay man's true well-being.

According to Greek philosophy, therefore, it was neither rational nor virtuous to love one's neighbor as oneself, and to do so deliberately was psychologically impossible.[8] This was directly in conflict with the teaching of both the Old and the New Testaments. Christian theology met the problem, not by rejecting Greek psychology, but by declaring that, although to fallen human nature obedience to the command is impossible, yet to the Christian it is made possible by the grace of God.

This position is maintained by Augustine and is very carefully stated by Thomas Aquinas. The virtues which can be cultivated by the natural man are summed up by Thomas [9] under the four traditional Greek categories as the cardinal virtues—wisdom, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Prudence, which is wisdom concerning things to be done, is the *sine qua non* of the other three virtues. Beyond these four, however, lie the three "theological virtues," faith, hope, and charity, which are "above man's nature," not the product of his own working. These virtues "God works in us without us." They are "infused" by divine grace. Of these three, charity is the greatest, but "the order of their generation" is first faith, then hope, then charity. For "the object of the theological virtues is God himself." It is only when, through the knowledge of God by revela-

[8] The difference, at this point, between the Platonic *eros* and the Christian *agape* is very clearly presented by Anders Nygren, but he refuses to recognize that a non-Christian "love of humanity" can have the spontaneous and disinterested character of the Christian concept. See *Agape and Eros*, trans. P. S. Watson (London: S. P. C. K., 1953), p. 95.

[9] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, II, Q. 61–63.

tion and by faith, man's mind is directed to a supernatural happiness, and by the power of God he enters into "a kind of participation of the Godhead," that man is able to exercise charity—that love of his fellows which is initiated and directed by reason and not by passion.

This theory of the moral will and the virtues linked itself easily with the doctrine of predestination and the notion of the exclusiveness of God's revelation to those in the Hebrew-Christian tradition. It passed from Catholic into Protestant theology, where it still persists in the minds of the more orthodox types of thinkers. Thus for Emil Brunner "natural ethics is dominated by the principle of self-seeking and self-reference." Only with the advent of faith does it become true that "we no longer are concerned with self-regarding aims, but with God's interests, with that which God wills. . . . The ethical impulse is no longer that of self-respect, but of love." [10]

The only excuse for the adoption by a Christian writer of this psychological egoism in the theory of motivation, is that it is so often adopted, in one form or another, by non-Christians, both ancient and modern. Contemporary psychologists and philosophers usually reject the view that reason can act as an agency to direct the will. They hold instead, with David Hume, that reason is the servant of desire, or interest.[11] All too often, however, they fail to recognize that other notable feature of Hume's psychology which he learned from Hutcheson and Butler, namely, that man's natural interests are not all primarily, or predominantly, self-regarding. They are, as we have already emphasized, primarily and predominantly object-centered, not

[10] Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1937), pp. 68, 69.

[11] Hume's use of the term "desire," rather than "interest," is unfortunate, for it suggests the view that he rejects, i.e., the "selfish hypothesis" that all interest is acquisitive.

self-centered; among the most absorbing objects of interest are other human beings; and the normal form of interest of one human being in another (when that other is viewed as end, rather than means) is an interest in his welfare, rather than in doing him harm.

Since reason (or intelligence) is not a power to initiate and direct action, but an instrument for the finding of means to ends, the ends at which human beings aim are those which spontaneously arouse interest, or are deliberately selected as means to other ends. Voluntary behavior is simply the intelligent selection of means and ends with a view to their harmony, integration, and freedom. The action is charitable, altruistic, or benevolent when the end thus selected is concerned directly and ultimately with the welfare of another person. Such motives are common and natural. As habits they tend to be confined to a rather narrow circle, but they may be spontaneously aroused and directed toward any human being, especially anyone in need; and the habit of widespread benevolence is by no means confined to those in whom it is cultivated by the medium of Christian faith. When charitable behavior, or any other type of behavior, is thought of as morally right, the experience of conscience provides additional motivation for the choice of such behavior and the cultivation of it as a habit; and such moral response and endorsement of charity or benevolence is common to all the great ethical religions and to many people outside them.

For modern psychology, therefore, reason is not a principle of action, but charity or benevolence is a spontaneous human reaction which may be freed and cultivated as a habit or inhibited by stronger drives. This modern view is empirically well substantiated and it has important implications for the concept of the immanence of God in man. Traditionally the immanence of God has been thought to

be manifest only in man's reason, not in the life of spontaneous impulse. The Christian scriptures teach that God is love—productive love. Traditional Christian theology, however, has not taught that God is immanent in man as a spontaneous and general tendency to productive love. It has seen the image of God in man, instead, in his logical power of reason, with its outreach to the infinite and its insight into the moral law. Adopting the Greek psychology, which viewed reason as a principle of action, it had to identify the divine reason with the divine love. But since it also accepted the Greek view that reason in man is self-regarding, it had to attribute this fact to human sin, obscuring the true nature of the image of God within him.

If, however, we recognize that reason is but the servant of man's interests (the capacity to select and order means to serve the ends toward which life spontaneously drives), and if we also recognize that these drives, or interests, are not primarily turned inward upon the self but outward, to deal constructively with objects, including, especially, the lives of other men, then a new conception of the divine immanence opens up to us. A constructive interest in the lives of others is exactly what is meant by charity—productive love. If God is love, then this is a part, at least, of the way in which man is made in the image of God. If God is our Father, then this is the Spirit of the Father in the child. Then, since this tendency to constructive interest in human life is, as we have already seen, so basic and prominent in man's personality that he can only be at peace within himself so far as he can harmonize his purposes with it, it would follow that man can only find peace in so far as he is true to that form of will within him which is in the image of God, and expresses the Spirit of God. Thus we could understand the reason for the truth that Augustine found: "Our souls are restless 'til they find rest in Thee."

The Immanence and Concreteness of God

This analysis of the psychological experience in which religious faith is rooted provides the answer to the question as to how the God of theism functions to fulfill the last three of the seven requirements of a satisfactory object of religious devotion listed at the beginning of this chapter. The fifth requirement is that the idea of God must be able to draw out a spontaneous response, so as to become a direct object of devotion, not merely something to which one becomes attached as a means to a further end. It is true, of course, that some people pay lip service to God and obey what they believe to be His commands in the hope of earthly or heavenly rewards, but if these were their major motives religious institutions would never have recorded a history of loyalty and devotion. It is true that much that passes for religious activity is not genuine devotion, and that people's motives are usually mixed, but it is certainly also true that most religious people find joy in what they regard as the service of God (indicating a genuine attachment or such service would be merely a burden) and it is further true that religious bodies under trial manifest a surprising capacity for loyalty and self-sacrifice.

The attitude of devotion in theistic religion, therefore, though not pure and consistent, is common and genuine. Its explanation we have found in its roots in moral experience. This experience is vivid and strong. It demands and receives attention. Even though the person tries to ignore it, it impresses itself upon him. If it is believed that the moral law is directly or indirectly the will of God, then, inescapably, in the moral experience man stands face to face with what he believes is the divine will, directly impressed upon him. His decisions for the right are decisions for God's service and in them he finds increasing strength

and joy. His failures are affronts to God for which he must either seek, and believe he obtains, God's forgiveness, or his religion becomes one of fear and trembling, rather than loyalty. But the God conceived as one of mercy, justice and love wins love and loyalty, and these are confirmed through the joy found in service. It is thus that devotion grows strong and becomes a power creating that loyalty to ideal ends which even those who, like Dewey, deplore anything savoring of the supernatural, nevertheless recognize as characteristically "religious."

Our sixth problem concerns the need that the object of devotion should be concrete, something immediately experienced. Abstract ideas, and complex concepts representing nothing perceived, do not readily become objects of interest, still less of attachment, except to intellectuals. Symbols help to create attachment, and so does the presentation of the abstract idea in poetry, song, and other forms of art. Patriotism, for example, may be stimulated by these means, but its ultimate roots lie in attachment to people, land, and language, which are concretely experienced—i.e., to some extent immediately given. In religion, the idea of God is enriched by symbol and art, which can be used to stir an emotional response, but it is the moral experience that really gives concreteness to the idea, i.e., gives it a basis in immediate givenness. Some other forms of mystical experience have the same effect, but they are relatively rare. The moral experience is essentially mystical, in that it is a nonsensory experience which nevertheless gives an impression of relating us to something objective, not merely dependent on our own will and imagination.

Much contemporary religious thought fails almost as badly as naturalism to recognize the concrete experience of the divine in the constraint of conscience. One reason for this is the failure to recognize the true nature of the critical

as distinct from the traditional conscience. The specific convictions of the traditional conscience certainly are not the leadership of God. The constraint to impartial concern for human welfare, however, is another matter. Naturalism has failed to recognize the divine here because it has not clearly distinguished it from the effects of social conditioning and has sought to avoid theistic conceptions in any case. The failure of much traditional theism to identify this constraint of the critical conscience (to love of one's fellow men) with the active presence of the divine in man is, however, chiefly due to the false psychology derived from the Greeks. The result is that emphasis has been placed on the transcendence and "otherness" of God, making Him a stranger who only occasionally breaks through into human consciousness to confront an individual with His demands.

Under the combined influence of Greek psychology and naturalistic interpretations of conscience, religious thought has tended to lose the vision which is the core of religious faith and hope, the vision which sees the power of God somehow present in the constraining influence of the sense of duty and that finds a oneness of the will of man with the will of God in the love wherewith a man may love his fellows. Yet this vision is the core of the New Testament conception of God. "God is love" (I John 4:8). " . . . It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. . . . That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:4, 9). ". . . Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, . . . [in that they] shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness" (Rom. 2:14, 15). "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets"

(Matt. 7:12). "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, . . . Thou shalt love they neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:37–40).

Here we see the single principle of the critical conscience, agape, productive love, set forth as the basis of the moral life. We see the assertion of man's universal capacity for conscientious insight into that law as not merely a God-given concept but as the presence and working of the divine life in man. And we are told that the essence of the divine life is love. When we turn from the New Testament to the records of religious, and particularly of Christian, life we find these conceptions borne out in experience. It is the duty of productive love to one's fellows that is endorsed by the critical conscience. It is in facing up to the implications of this duty that the best of men find themselves falling short and faced with a demand that condemns them. It is this demand that, in a life of religious devotion, is recognized as the ideal. And it is in the vision of that ideal as embodied in the Source of all life, Whose will we feel constraining ours to be loyal to the ideal, that the religious personality finds its inspiration and strength.

Walking Humbly with God

Finally, we come to the seventh requirement in an object of religious devotion which is to meet man's need. It must develop and tend to maintain an attitude of humility rather than spiritual pride. Does the theistic interpretation of the moral experience do this? Or does the idea of being in the service of a personal power beyond ourselves, who is supremely good, have the reverse effect upon men, and tend to make them self-righteously proud, despising those not consciously enlisted in that service? It must be admitted

that such pride is all too often manifest in the lives of believers. It is, as we have seen, a fault that is apt to beset the best of men simply because they are among the best. But is this besetting weakness of the strong enhanced or mitigated by theistic faith? In Chapter 7 we shall examine the adventitious accretions of that faith which become sources of corruption in it. Here, however, we must see its simple essentials and weigh their effect upon the human mind.

Let us set aside, for the present, what philosophical theology, historical tradition, and myth have had to say about the God of theism and see what elements of interpretation are essential to turn the experience of the critical conscience into an object beyond the self regarded as supremely worthy of devotion. In the first place, the constraint of conscience must be attributed to the relation presently existing between the self and some power beyond it that exercises this influence, though there may be many different explanations of the nature of this relation and the way the influence is exercised. Secondly, that power must be regarded as conscious of the influence it exercises; otherwise, it could not be conceived as the ultimate object of devotion but only as a means to human values. In other words, the object of devotion must be personal or it could not be of supreme worth.[12] In the third place, this personal being must be regarded as equally concerned for the good of all men, since his demand upon us is that we should be so concerned; and this concern for their good implies that his constraining influence must be operative in their lives as in ours, so that they too are beings who are, or can become, conscious of the divine will.

[12] For a criticism of H. N. Wieman's attempt to frame a religiously satisfactory impersonal concept of God see my earlier work, *A Realistic Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1942).

From these considerations, it follows, almost inevitably, that the personal God, so conceived, must be somehow the ultimate source of human life and interested in our ultimate destiny. Beyond this, however, further deductions become more and more speculative. There is nothing clearly implied in these essential ideas as to God's relation to the physical world or his power over it, nothing as to His providence in history, nothing as to any special revelation of Himself save that experienced in the constraint of conscience, which is the ultimate source of our thought and knowledge of Him. These questions may or may not be open to fruitful inquiry through the study of history and science, and particularly the history of man's religious experience and activity. All that is essential to the religious life in theistic faith is the concept of God's personality and love and the awareness of his constraining will that men should love one another.

We can now consider the effect upon the tendency to spiritual pride of a belief in such a God and of an attitude of love, or devotion, to Him. In the first place, it tends to extrovert the personality. Even though a man recognizes the moral values as of supreme importance, and strongly desires to be a morally worthy person, the ultimate end set before him is the service of God, not the cultivation of his own virtue. The stronger his love of God the less satisfied will he be with himself and his service of God, but the more joy will he find in that service. Thus he can live a a full life and reap the reward of joy in it without becoming pleased or satisfied with the contemplation of his own righteousness. In the second place, the ideal is set so high that he can never feel that he is really living up to it. That ideal is a concern for the welfare of all others that is no less than a man's natural and wholesome concern for his own welfare. It is a pattern to which he may more and

more closely conform, yet one in the light of which he is always imperfect. Its effect, therefore, is to create, not conceit in his own virtue, but humility. Thirdly, there is the fact that the immediacy of God's presence is felt in the constraints and demands of conscience and in its condemnations, not in the complacency of self-approval. Not that, in the sense of God's presence a man must always feel the divine displeasure and disapproval. The person who *wants* to serve God, and believes that he has failed to do so, may feel the constraint of his conscience that tells him of the presence and otherness of God, but his conviction of the goodness and love of God, together with the consciousness of the desire to serve Him better, create the sense of forgiveness and communion. Thus the literature of religious experience reveals the fact that in humility of spirit, and in that alone, a man may find peace and security in the sense of the divine presence.

It is, therefore, in the humble estate of penitence that theistic faith is born. Its influence throughout is to keep man humble in his own eyes while it makes him more worthy of praise in the eyes of others. And it is only while he retains his humility that his faith remains alive. For if he develops spiritual pride, though he may retain theological beliefs, the dynamic of faith withers and dies. Becoming insensitive to his own spiritual deficiency he no longer feels the constraining power that creates the sense of the presence of God. He no longer walks with God, for he cannot walk humbly. He marches instead in the confidence of his own self-sufficiency, perhaps waving the banner of a theology which he is proud to have acquired, though it has ceased to have any meaning to him save that of a banner. Perhaps still more proudly he casts it aside. He marches, however, in the causes he is proud to serve, and in pursuit of the power he is confident he knows well how to wield.

The Simple Theistic Faith

In concluding this chapter on the faith of theism it may be well to state again, briefly, but fully, the intellectual content *essential* to that faith. It is the tragedy of Christendom that this is what its creeds never attempted to do. The Church only made creeds to settle disputes, to give decisions on points that had been questioned. The result is that the unquestioned essentials of its faith were never stated in the creeds; they (the creeds) are confined to decisions on matters of doubt. To clarify the essential elements of belief in the faith of Theism we have therefore to go behind the creeds to things that all believed so implicitly that they were never challenged. Among these our analysis of the roots of theistic faith in the needs and experience of the moral life reveal the following thoughts as constituting its intellectual essence:

That man is loved of God.
That man should love God with all his heart.
That man should love his neighbor as himself.
That in such love to God and man the human spirit is made whole.

This was the faith of the greatest of the Hebrew prophets. It shines out also from the theistic religions of the East. And with marvellous simplicity, clarity, and force it was the faith of Jesus Christ. With peerless art he embodied it in those two deathless stories which we call the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. Its implications for daily living he expounded in the sayings collected as the Sermon on the Mount. Though distorted by extraneous influences, and overlaid with unscientific speculation and superstition, this faith has been the inspiration of almost all that is best in the culture known

as Christendom. It is the force that accounts for the difference between the carelessness for the life and freedom of the masses in the slave states of the ancient world and the Orient, and the conception of the rights of man as man, and the growing sense of social responsibility for the needy, that characterize the modern world. In its purity, it is a faith that does not drive by fear, but wins by love. It overcomes selfishness in the only way it can be overcome—by drawing us out of ourselves and creating a broad and impartial interest in our fellows. It destroys pride in the only way it can be destroyed—by making us aware and ashamed of it. It calms our fears in the only way they can be calmed without blinding us to dangers—by revealing the supremacy over all values of the values created in the life of faith itself, which are imperishably secure in the relation of man to God.

Chapter 6

FAITH AND REASON

The Independence of Faith

We have seen how the simple theistic faith arises in the human mind, how it functions to secure wholeness of personality, and what is its essential intellectual content. This intellectual content is constantly subject to criticism and modification by ideas derived from factors extraneous to it. The most important of these influences are those of the critical reason and tradition. In this chapter and the next we shall examine their relation to, and influence upon, the simple theistic faith—an influence which, in both cases, has been both bad and good. In the present chapter we shall be concerned with the activity of reason in a contemporary criticism of faith. In Chapter 7 we shall examine its effects, in conjunction with other factors, in the creation of a tradition which both supports and distorts faith.

It will be well to begin our examination of the relations of faith and reason by defining our terms. We are using the term "reason" in the broad sense which includes all intellectual activity by which knowledge is acquired; and by "knowledge" we mean not only certainty, but all beliefs which, as shown by elaborate testing, enable us to make statements in accord with facts of experience. "Faith," on the other hand, is not merely intellectual activity. It is much broader. It includes faithfulness, loyalty, or devotion. It is both conative and cognitive. It is an attitude of attach-

ment or commitment to something. It may be defined as an attitude toward some fact based on a certain understanding and appreciation of value in that fact, and tending to issue in further thought and action in accord with the understanding of the fact and its value. This definition may be applied to faith in a friend or in a bank as well as to religious faith. In theistic faith the basic fact, as we have seen, is the constraint of the critical conscience. The understanding and evaluation of it is that stated above as the intellectual content of simple theistic faith. The further thought and action that issue from it are philosophical and historical theology and the ethical decisions of the religious life.

Since theistic faith is concerned with a fact, of which it involves a certain understanding and interpretation, it cannot escape the necessity of reconciling its interpretation with the interpretations of this and related facts that constitute our knowledge of science and history. It is not to be expected, however, that faith's interpretation of its fact should, through logical or scientific testing, attain the status of knowledge. There are two reasons for this. In the first place, it is shown by experience that a belief in the God of theism, held by those who are clearly aware that this belief, by logical and empirical tests, falls far short of objectively demonstrable knowledge, can nevertheless function in life to make God, thus understood, an object of supreme devotion. And this can be shown to be the case among those who are both high and low in the intellectual and educational scales. In the second place it is clear, upon reflection, that if such belief did amount to objectively demonstrable knowledge the effect of this would be to blight the higher development of the spiritual life.

This latter point is one of great importance. If man knew for certain the reality of the constant presence of a

personal God, he would be in the position of a child living at every moment in the presence of a perfectly wise, loving, and just parent. Even though that parent refused to make decisions for the child, and left him to find out for himself about many things, the child could never develop any real independence. To disobey the known basic principles taught by such a parent would be the most complete folly. To adhere to those principles would require nothing more than elementary prudence. So, too, would it be for man with objectively certain knowledge of the presence of God. Living in the assurance of such protective love and power, courage would never be called upon to rise to its heights. Love would be made almost meaningless by the conviction that its rewards must be so much richer than its gifts. Honesty would be no more virtuous than the shoplifter's decision not to steal while the owner is looking. There would be no opportunity to develop independence and strength of character. Only in a situation where a man can believe that his decisions and his actions are to some extent his own secret can he feel that the responsibility for them is entirely his, that they are not being forced upon him by external pressures. And without such responsibility man would be something less than completely human.

The belief that is born of faith, without the evidence that would make it count as objective knowledge, has, on the other hand, not a blighting, but an inspiring effect. It rests upon appreciation of the call of the sense of duty as worthy of man's full devotion. Thus the faith is itself an attainment and an expression of the independence, responsibility, and decision of the moral life at its best. It can live only so long as the moral attitude is alive. And it lives, not as a parasite on the rest of the moral life, but as an inspiring part of it, giving it greater and richer meaning, unity, and courage.

Such faith can attain the strength of a subjective certainty in which doubt disappears. Superficially it might seem as though this would also reduce moral decisions to the level of elementary prudence. But if the subjective certainty is an achievement of faith rather than an effect of objective evidence this does not happen, for in the attainment of faith the personality has already developed beyond the attitude dominated by prudence to that in which the predominant motive is love of God and man. Faith is born of love, and it lives only so long as it is sustained by love. Its effect is to sustain love in return when love is assailed by such opposing motives as fear, anger, pride, and weariness. If, in the face of these, love falters in spite of faith, then faith falters too. So faith never lives to determine a decision by prudence where love has failed. It can only reinforce love where love exists. And this it does chiefly by strengthening the love-winning power of the object of love, and only secondarily by calling in a high and distant counsel of prudence to weaken the opposing motives by which love is assailed.

The subjective certainty that is born of faith, which in turn is born of love, is therefore a factor that helps, but cannot injure, the finer development of the moral life. The sort of certainty, or near certainty, that can be injurious is that which is believed to rest on objective evidence. Objective evidence is a nonmoral factor compelling belief and impelling conduct; it may override love and it leaves no room for faith. It is therefore a *condition* of faith and of the higher development of the moral life that one must see that there *is* room for doubt. Some measure of doubt is a precondition of faith. In those societies in which a fixed and unquestioned religious tradition is allowed to impose itself from generation to generation the morality of the unthinking multitude tends to sink to the level of a mere

otherworldly prudence, and their religion to the practice of a cult and the acceptance of a creed with very little of the spark of faith. This was, in part, the blight that crushed the spiritual life of the Middle Ages. That period is miscalled the Age of Faith. It was an age of uncritical credulity and otherworldly prudence. Only when the Renaissance made doubt again possible did faith come to life again. Faith must triumph over doubt, but there can be no faith without a doubt to triumph over.

The fact that the intellectual content of the theistic faith cannot be proved is, therefore, not in any way a reason for casting doubt upon it. This insusceptibility of proof is an essential condition of faith's fulfilling its function. The claim to proof made by Catholicism, if believed, is only a source of dogmatic authoritarianism and a blight upon real faith and the higher phases of the moral life. Even Catholicism saves itself from this effect to some extent by recognizing that faith must come first. "I believe in order that I may understand." The demand for proof made by agnostic and sceptic is a misunderstanding of the nature and function of faith which is excused by the fact that Catholic orthodoxy and some Protestant apologists have also misunderstood the place of reason in the religious life and claimed to offer proofs of the existence of God. Protestantism on the whole, however, has repudiated this error. It has recognized that religion is a life of faith. Its dogmatism has rested on claims to revelation attested by experience and recognized by faith. It is unfortunate, however, that Protestant liberalism, resisting dogmatic claims to revelation, and insisting on intelligence in religion, has sometimes made the mistake of claiming that the idea of God can be proved, or at least shown to be so probable that faith could be interpreted as a decision to act upon a basis established by reason with a high degree of probability.

Criticism and Justification of Faith

Faith, then, is not dependent upon the positive support of reason. On the other hand, it is not independent of the negative criticism of reason. To say, as does Kierkegaard, that the essential significance of religious faith lies in the belief in the absurd, is not merely nonsense; it is unethical. Man has no right to surrender his reason. He deludes himself if he persuades himself that he believes a contradiction which he knows to be a contradiction. And it is immoral to try to persuade others to believe what one knows they can only accept in defiance of their reason. Faith, therefore, must recognize that, though it does not have to depend on reason, and would cease to be faith if it did, yet its bounds are set by reason and it has no right to transcend them. Faith has its sphere in the realm of "may be," between what is known to be and known not to be. In that sphere ideas have varying logical and empirical probability, and faith must take account of these probabilities.

Faith does not, however, merely adjust the strength of its attachment to an idea to the degree of rational probability attached to it. It adjusts its attachment to the *value* of the idea, and the rational probability of the idea is accepted as one phase of its value. In some situations, e.g., in faith in a bank's solvency, the element of rational probability is the most important consideration in the estimate of value. In other cases, such as faith in the innocence of a friend accused of a crime, the objective evidence is of much less significance in determining the estimate of value by which the attitude of loyalty, or faith, may be justified.

Similarly, the justification of an attitude of religious faith depends upon an estimate of the value of the object as interpreted in the intellectual content of the faith; and

the rational probability of the interpretation constitutes a part of that value. However, in the case of the faith of theism the value of the idea does not increase concomitantly with its probability up toward the point of certainty. As we have seen, if it were to approach certainty, or attain a very high probability, its ethical and personality value would suffer. Its ethical value would also suffer if it had a clear negative probability (i.e., an improbability), for it would then involve a believing against the reasonable balance of evidence. Its optimum value is therefore maintained if it can be shown to have a modest degree of positive probability. It is impossible, of course, to present an exact estimate of the probability of a proposition that is not concerned exclusively with known types of uniformity, but a modest degree of positive probability of the intellectual content of theism could be claimed as demonstrated if it could be shown that there are no good reasons for believing the doctrine false and some good reasons for believing it true.

I think it may be claimed that the history of philosophical discussion has shown this to be the case. As I have discussed these questions extensively elsewhere, however, it will be well to treat them only briefly here. The scepticism common among philosophers is due chiefly to five considerations, all of which we have already shown to be irrelevant to the theistic faith as here stated: (1) The idea that religious belief should, if acceptable, be reasonably defended by arguments convincing to the intelligence. This has been refuted by showing the true nature, basis, and function of faith and its incompatibility with a rational demonstration by argument. If the true relation of faith and reason were understood it would remove half the intellectual objections to theism. (2) The fact that the physical evil in the universe is incompatible with the idea of an omnipotent deity.

This is admitted in the simple faith of Theism, which does not assert omnipotence. (3) The evil of authoritarianism which has entered religion through rationalism and magic. This, however, is also repudiated by the simple faith of theism. (4) The fact that theism has added to its simple faith a mass of doctrine based chiefly on untenable claims to historical revelation. The surrender of these while clinging to the simple faith has the superficial appearance of the gradual, and now almost complete, collapse of a faith *every part of which stands on the same decaying foundation.* This has been shown not to be the case. The faith of theism is a wholesome and reasonable interpretation of a common experience, while the decaying creeds are dubious interpretations of historical facts or legends. This will be further demonstrated in our next chapter. (5) The use in the past of inadequate philosophical arguments to support theism, together with the claim that the existence of God can be proved by reason. In demolishing such arguments, many philosophers felt that they were demolishing theism itself, not realizing that, as we have shown, they were doing faith a service.

Materialism and Determinism

There remain, however, some philosophical positions, accepted by some philosophers, which would, if sound, constitute good reasons for rejecting the simple theistic faith. The two most important of these are materialism and certain types of determinism. It will be well to say something briefly of these. Materialism is the view that the only reality is matter, the sort of existence that appears in sensory experience, or is revealed through it. Mind, or consciousness, is regarded as simply a peculiar property possessed by certain organizations of matter found in animals and particu-

larly in the human brain. There can, therefore, be no interpenetration of minds, and no influence of mind on mind, except through physical impact on sense organs; minds cannot survive their bodies and there can be no minds other than those of men and animals. Determinism is held in many forms, some of which seek to define a form of self-determination which is not incompatible with individual moral responsibility. The form which is incompatible with theism is that which undermines the recognition of one's own moral responsibility by interpreting causation as a chain of absolutely necessary connection determining the course of all bodily behavior and thought. What we experience as intention, decision, and effort cannot, then, change the course of events from that which antecedent conditions determined they should be ages before the intention, decision, or effort was formed.

These two philosophical positions are highly metaphysical. They claim to know a great deal about the reality that determines the course of our sensory experience, and about the ultimate nature of what does and what does not exist. In particular, their claim to negative knowledge, knowledge of the nonexistence of mind except in limited forms and places, and knowledge of the impossibility of effective voluntary intervention in the course of events, is very bold and sweeping. Modern advances in physics, in the physiology of brain injuries, and in abnormal psychology have cut the ground from under many of the assumptions on which this boldness rested. Even more effective has been contemporary philosophical criticism of the theory of knowledge. This critique has been carried out by pragmatists, positivists, and other naturalistic philosophers who have been innocent of any intention of thereby supporting theism, but it has almost swept the philosophical scene clear of metaphysical materialists who would claim that their view is anything

but a postulate adopted in the interests of the extension of methods of natural science to every sphere of investigation.

As for determinism, most philosophers have learned that they have no right to speak of absolute necessities. Determinism also is only justified as a carefully defined and limited postulate made in the interests of science. Further, when it is once recognized that the entities and laws of which physics speaks are not something proved to exist and operate as described, but simply postulates made for purely scientific purposes, then it becomes clear that the materialistic determinism known as mechanism must certainly be abandoned. For the test of a scientific hypothesis and the utility of a postulate is that it enables the scientist to *predict and control* the course of physical events. Physical events are therefore postulated as both *predictable and controllable* by the thoughts and volitions of the scienist. Thus matter, or the system of physical events, as posited in science, *by definition*, is recognized as subject not only to prediction but also to a limited human control.

The Contemporary Critique of Knowledge

Few philosophers today would claim that materialism and determinism (understood as the assertion of a chain of absolute causal necessity unchangeable by intention, decision, and effort) are well-established philosophical positions constituting good reason for rejection of the simple theistic faith. Very many, however, would claim that the contemporary critique of human knowledge leaves no ground for propositions about reality, or existence, which can be used either to support or adversely criticize its beliefs.

The contemporary critique of knowledge most commonly involves the following three points: (1) It rejects synthetic a priori propositions, i.e., propositions asserting

some factual content and held to be immediately known as universally valid. This can be cheerfully accepted by holders of the simple theistic faith for it undermines the evil of rationalism,[1] and such propositions are not needed in the sort of support that faith would find helpful. (2) It rejects the claim that sensory experience reveals a world of material substance, or a system of nonsensory events, as underlying or antecedent to it and determining the course of its appearance; i.e., it rejects materialism and physical realism. This also the holder of the simple theistic faith could accept with equanimity. He can rejoice in the demise of materialism and many types of physical realism, though he might be glad to accept some types of physical realism as a wholesome check on extravagances of mysticism, or as an explanation of the limitations of divine power. (3) It frequently refuses to recognize that we are directly aware of the occurrence of unique mental acts. This is typical of instrumentalism and positivism. The possibility of mental activity as a unique existent is not denied, for that would be a metaphysical position inconsistent with the epistemological critique, but its occurrence and uniqueness are left much in doubt. Here the holder of the simple theistic faith must demur. He holds to the reality of intention, effort, and decision; and recognition of the immediacy of our awareness of these mental activities is a prime point in favor of his position.

The denial of mental acts is made in the attempt to escape from a dualism which, like that of Descartes, would define the mental and the physical in such terms that they have nothing in common and their interrelation therefore becomes unintelligible. The common objects of experience, as given in sensation, are taken as ultimately real. So, too, are images and feelings, but it is denied that they contain anything distinct in nature from sensory objects. Thought

[1] See Chapter 7.

is accounted for by recognizing that some images and sensory objects are related to others by the peculiar relation of symbolism, whereby part of the given content of experience may refer to something not given. The manner in which this relation makes its appearance in the world is recognized as utterly mysterious, but that the occurrence of the symbolic relation involves any new kind of entity or event not present in nonsymbolic experience is denied. The emergence of symbolism is attributed to connections formed by sensory objects and images in past experience, and the mystery is left there.

There are two weaknesses in this position. The first is its ignoring of the question as to what makes the difference between an image or sense experience which is not a symbol and one which is. The difference is not merely that the former is not associated with, and does not recall, some other imagery and the latter does. Association and recall do not constitute meaning. The sound of the word "alpha" may be associated with and recall both "beta" and "A", but it only *means* "A", not beta". The difference is that in certain connections "alpha" is *taken for* "A". It is *intended* for "A". It *refers* to A, not by reason of its own unique properties, or merely by reason of its having appeared together with "A" in the past, but because of the *intentional reference* involved in the way it has been *used* in the past. However, *taking for, referring, intending,* and *using* are acts, and their activity does not consist in movement or pressure. They are various modes of the act of *attending* to the contents of experience. Attending, in all its modes (intending, expecting, referring, anticipating, retrospecting, interpreting, liking, disliking, deciding, preferring, wanting, loving, hating), is a unique kind of activity, not in any way akin to the activity of sensory objects and images, or the postulated activity of electrons and protons.

This brings us to the second weakness of the position we are criticizing. The process of symbolization does not by any means exhaust that of mental process. Mental activity has its conative as well as a cognitive character. Liking, disliking, wanting, preferring, deciding are conative modes of attention, and are just as distinct as the cognitive modes from the sort of activity performed by sensory, imaginal, and ideational objects. They cannot be analyzed in terms of feeling states to which we may *attend*. There is a sense of the distinction of subjective and objective in which all that can be attended to is objective, and only the *attending* is subjective. It is the subjective in this sense that is missing from the account of experience offered by those who ignore the distinctive nature of mental acts. Experience is bipolar. At one pole is the objective content, consisting of various qualities in various relations. Some of this content is also objective in the other sense of being public, i.e., content for more than one observer, thus making communication possible; other parts of the objective content are subjective in this latter sense, i.e., the private content of only one observer. The other pole of experience is subjective in the former sense, akin to the grammatical usage; it comprises the doer of the action. And this subjective activity is rich in the varying modes referred to by use of the psychological verbs, such as those listed above. This duality of the active and passive elements in experience, the subjective and objective poles, must be faced as a fact. The philosopher, in his anxiety to avoid the difficulties of idealism and dualism, must not allow himself to ignore or blur the distinction between the two poles of experience.

Our Bipolar World

The subjective pole of experience is also part of the content. We are aware of it, though it is difficult, if not

impossible, to attend to it. Attention is directed upon the objective content, and attempts at introspection, seeking to concentrate attention on subjective activity, seem to miss the subjective act and merely discover faint elements of the objective content which are subjective in the second sense, ie., private, such as muscular tensions. It is this that has convinced many introspectors that the experience of subjective activity must be illusory, and it has helped to support the instrumentalist and positivist denial of the existence of mental acts. Yet there is no doubt that a person is normally aware of when he is attending and when he is not, and can state, *as immediate report of the content of his experience*, that he, at the previous moment, was *attending* to a noise, *intentionally* moving his hand, *anticipating* the movement of another person, *wishing* he would not move, *deciding* on a course of action, *trying hard* not to appear concerned, and so forth.

What is reported in such statements is not states of feeling, such as pleasure or sensation, nor is it imagery, or relations, or passive changes of relation between any of these. The anticipation of a sensation, for example, is not itself a sensation, nor any other kind of feeling or image, nor merely a relation between such. It is a subjective activity, responding to some such objective content. And when we anticipate, we are normally aware of the fact and can report it. Perhaps it is the fact that the so-called "specious present," the lived moment of present experience, contains an extent of time within which we can distinguish before and after, that makes this awareness of our own activity possible; i.e., it may be that the activity we are aware of is that which lies in the earlier part of the moment constituting our present. However this may be, the fact is clear. We are aware commonly of these activities at the moment of performing them, and they are uniquely distin-

guishable from the variously related qualitative content upon which they are directed.

If, in spite of such considerations as these, a philosopher still denies that he has any distinctive experience corresponding to the use of the psychological verbs (e.g., attend, intend, anticipate, strive, resist) then those of us who believe we have this experience can only regard its absence as psychological blindness and attribute it to a sort of occupational disease. It is well known that people who cultivate habits of abstract thinking tend to lose their capacity for visual imagery and it may be that certain habits of philosophical thinking tend to inhibit the noticing of certain common but rather elusive elements in ordinary experience. In any case this is more likely than the alternative theory, that the vast majority of people assume (and when asked report) the occurrence of a unique type of experience they do not have.

The world of which we are a part is therefore a bipolar world. Its objective pole consists of sensory objects, such as tables, chairs, and human bodies, including our own, a large part of which we can immediately feel. We learn that this world of sensory objects must be recognized as much more extensive than any present experience of it, though it is a very puzzling question as to what status it has at moments when it is not part of our experience. That question, however, is of little importance here. What is important is to recognize that the subjective pole consists of a uniquely distinct set of activities which may be classified as mental, or better as interest, processes, for they all consist of taking some kind of interest in the objective world. Further, these interest processes are systematically interrelated to form what we call a mind, and only a small part of this organized whole is aware of itself, or conscious, at any one time. It also has continuity through periods of unconsciousness.

The Problem of a World Order

To make a theoretical world order out of the discontinuous scraps of our experience we need to postulate some connecting events and relations. The only theories of this kind which can have any positive probability are those which postulate these unknown events and relations as further occurrences of the sort of events and relations which occur in our experience. So long as we keep within these limits, and do not claim *proof* for speculations, we shall not fall foul of the contemporary critique of human knowledge. For the purpose of testing the theistic faith by the criterion of a scientifically reasonable view of the world order we can accept these limitations and criteria. We can even agree to take Hume seriously and make no appeal to any principle of causation, confining ourselves to tentative generalizations concerning the particulars of experience. We must, however, insist on the recognition of subjective activity as well as objective qualities, relations, and events as distinguishable among these particulars.

We find then, at the objective pole of experience, a system of spatiotemporal events, correlated with various sensory qualities, and interrelated in certain uniform ways which make the system to some extent predictable and "retrodictable" as stretching indefinitely into the future and the past. These events make their impact of attraction and repulsion upon the subjective pole and are to a very limited extent controllable by its activity. At the subjective pole we find a system of acts of attention, or interest processes, teleologically interrelated, i.e., organized as acts of attention to an end in view and to means to such ends. No end is final, every end in view, when attained, becoming in its turn a means to a further end. We find that the temporal continuity of *conscious* processes is broken every day, but

that their teleological continuity survives the breaks. Teleological continuity is that continuity of means and ends whereby, in conscious experience, the end attained in one activity becomes the material and motive out of which new strivings toward new ends are generated and may serve as means to the new ends. It is this continuity that constitutes the identity of a personality, and the personality has unity so far as its ends form an integrated and mutually supporting whole. The subjective activity of the individual thus manifests a teleological structure which survives the periods of unconsciousness.

It was formerly thought that this continuity of teleological structure through periods of unconsciousness requires a substantial continuity, a mental substance, or else a dependence of subjective continuity on the continuity of the brain, as explanation. Modern psychology, however, has found abundant evidence of the continuous functioning of subjective activity through periods of unconsciousness. Consciousness is merely the retention in the present of memory of the immediate past and the exercise of powers of recall. Subjective activity, as attention to the immediate present and immediate future, may function along lines of established habit, in established purposive forms, without this retrospective element. Such an unconscious interest process appears to be continuous and forms a massive background to the small part of mental activity which is conscious. Even in its unconscious phases, it has teleological continuity. When unconscious feeling-striving processes are recovered to consciousness we find that the felt end, or result, of the one activity functions as material, motive, and means for further strivings generated from it and working toward new ends, in conformity with the dominant structure. This may therefore be taken to be the characteristic form of all feeling-striving, whether or not it ever becomes conscious.

An individual mind, therefore, can be regarded as a continuously growing organization of such interest processes, its partial and intermittent conscious activity serving only to make possible the reorientation of interests in the light of past experience and thus the progressive modification of the dominant structure.

This continuity of subjective process through periods of unconsciousness also suggests the solution of another problem—that of the nature of vital process as distinct from both conscious mental activity and mere physicochemical activity. It may well be that all vital process is a primitive form of unconscious subjective activity transmitted from parent to offspring, the definite forms of the subjective processes combining with the distinctive physicochemical structure to constitute the distinctive sensitivity, typical behavior patterns, and growth tendencies of the species. Once it is recognized that vital process, though something less than conscious mental activity, is more than merely physicochemical, the principle of economy of hypotheses would suggest this as a very probable solution of the problem. Whatever may be the answer to this question, however, we are still faced with that of the beginning of subjective activity.

In answer to this question there are four alternatives. (1) Subjective activity may have arisen spotaneously[2] at the beginning of the evolution of life on earth, and its teleological and temporal continuity may thence be maintained (for the most part unconsciously) through the whole process of development. (2) It may have arisen spontaneously at some relatively late stage of animal development and thence have been similarly maintained from generation to generation. (3) It may arise or have arisen spontaneously

[2] I.e., without teleological and temporal continuity with antecedent subjective activity.

at some time after conception in each individual human and animal organism in which it is manifested. (4) Subjective activity may not be confined to living organisms but may be present in our environment as a more general feature of the world order (a life or mind of the universe) which has teleological and temporal continuity with the specific form of subjective activity which we find emerging on earth, whether this emerges separately in the life history of each individual that manifests it or whether it emerges at the beginning of the process of biological evolution, or at some later stage of animal evolution, and is thence continuous through all generations.

Now there is no logical impossibility about any of these alternatives. It is not self-contradictory to deny that out of nothing nothing comes, nor is it self-evident that antecedent conditions must contain something in some way resembling the succeeding events. Nevertheless, no positive probability can be claimed for any hypothesis concerning the antecedents of an event unless some analogous case can be found in experience. It is therefore clear that no positive probability can be claimed for any of the first three hypotheses, for they postulate a negative proposition for which no analogue can be found. If the subjective activity now manifest in the world is recognized as a continuum of subjective activity transmitted from parent to offspring, then the hypothesis is that there was no subjective activity of any kind present among the immediate antecedents of this terrestrial chain of subjective activity and having teleological continuity with it. If subjective activity is regarded as beginning afresh at some point in the life history of each individual, then the hypothesis is that there is never any subjective activity present among the immediate antecedents of these beginnings and teleologically continuous with them.

To hypotheses of this kind it is clear that there can be no analogue, for no succession of events outside the range of subjective activity could be analogous to the occurrence of a subjective event at all; and no succession of events within the range of subjective activity could be analogous to the occurrence of a subjective event without a subjective activity as antecedent. It cannot even be claimed that within the realm of physical events there are known sequences where the later event differs as much from anything among its immediate antecedents as a subjective event does from physical events, for all physical events are much more like each other than they are like subjective events. The conclusion, therefore, is obvious. The first three hypotheses, postulating the emergence of subjective activity on earth without antecedents in the form of some kind of subjective activity, though not logically impossible, are hypotheses for which no positive probability can be claimed.

Belief in such an hypothesis can only be logically justified if it can be shown that all logically possible alternatives are subject to objections which create for them some degree of improbability rather than positive probability. If several logically possible alternatives are equally devoid of positive or negative probability, then each of these alternatives is equally probable. Religious faith could be content if its thesis were one of such equally open alternatives. It can feel itself stronger, however, if it can claim some positive probability for its thesis while there is none for the alternatives. Now the thesis of the theistic faith involves the view that our subjective activity has teleological continuity with a more general subjective activity of the world order antecedent to it. There is, as we have seen, no well-grounded objection to this thesis and no positive consideration in favor of its alternatives. So it is, at least, a thesis with which religious faith may logically be content. We can,

however, go further, and claim that there is, for this thesis, some positive probability.

In its favor, the consideration that it is based on good analogy can at least be claimed. In psychological study we find innumerable cases where subjective activity seems to emerge without teleological connection with antecedent subjective activity, but investigation shows that the appearance of unconnected emergence (or an emergence connected only with physiological processes) is false. The antecedent subjective activity was there, conscious or unconscious, and teleologically connected with that which later appears as if spontaneously. This is so common that we have little hesitation in generalizing and affirming the teleological continuity of the whole subjective activity of each individual, whatever the apparent gaps.

There is also good reason, as has been briefly suggested above, to believe that there is similar continuity, teleological and temporal, of the subjective activity or feeling-striving process manifested in the whole system of biological evolution. Subjective activity appears to be integrated with the physicochemical system of the living organism throughout the whole process of evolutionary development, and teleologically continuous throughout. In living organisms we recognize its presence through certain peculiarities in the operation of their physicochemical systems. If (as seems very probable) these peculiarities indicate the presence of subjective activity, they could indicate either that subjective activity is present here but absent elsewhere, or that there is present in living organisms a distinctive form of subjective activity which is teleologically continuous with another form antecedently operative outside organic structures. Which is the more likely? If we answer this question in conformity with the generalization concerning teleological continuity, found to be justified in other cases of our

search for the antecedents of a subjective activity, then it is the latter hypothesis that must be adopted. Of the two possibilities, it alone has any positive probability. And in the light of the strength of the generalization on which it is based, the probability would seem to be fairly strong.

If it is contended that subjective activity can only be recognized as appearing after conception, or after birth, in the higher animals and man the logical position is just the same. The hypothesis that the subjective activity in which the individual mind is initiated is not teleologically continuous with any antecedent subjective activity is an hypothesis without positive probability. The only positive probability belongs to the hypothesis of teleological continuity. For all research into the beginnings of subjective activities, through the whole life history of the individual, however lacking it may be in conscious continuity, indicates that subjective activities are teleologically continuous with antecedent subjective activities. We may have great difficulty in finding these antecedents, but we have learned to assume with confidence that they have occurred. Somewhere in the early life history we come to a point where, according to the view under discussion, it is asserted that no further traces of subjective activity can be found. But even this does not justify the assumption that the initial subjective activity of the type that is recognized is different from all other instances of its kind in that it arises without teleological continuity with subjective activity of *any* form. Subjective activity, as known, is the sort of event that has teleological continuity with antecedent subjectivity of some form, and the only hypothesis concerning the origin of any particular series of subjective activities that can have any positive probability is one that postulates its teleological connection with antecedent subjective activity.

The thesis thus far defended, however, does not amount to that of the theistic faith. It could be the case that the subjective activity, postulated as operative outside of living organisms and antecedent to the specialized forms we find on earth, was and is merely an unconscious feeling-striving of a minimal kind, not one which envisaged the possibility of developing individuals of human intelligence by initiating an interest process concerned with the sort of constructive activity and social intercourse with which we find life on earth is engaged. To accept this suggestion, however, would again be the acceptance of much the less probable of two alternatives. When the question concerns results reached by a process that is admittedly teleological, and we find individuals struggling shortsightedly with tasks set them by their environment and unintentionally realizing results of a significance and value to the whole community of individuals, far transcending anything envisioned by any one of them, experience shows that it is only reasonable to assume that their efforts are to a great extent coordinated by an intelligence that is guiding them, through some control over the environment, in the realization of a plan. If the coordination is not perfect, this does not indicate absence of any over-all plan but merely the absence of complete regimentation by the agency envisioning the plan, or some incompleteness in control over the environment.

There can be no doubt that the whole picture of biological and social evolution is one of comparatively unregimented, freely striving but shortsighted individuals, whose efforts are coordinated to the realization of a succession of such goals beyond the comprehension of those at the time participating in them. There is therefore very good reason to believe that the subjective activity of the world order antecedent to this evolutionary process, and from which it has sprung, has prepared the environment, and through it

coordinates the activity, to realize those larger ends and values which it has already manifested and continues to promise.

We are thus led to a world view which accords well with the simple theistic faith and with that interpretation of it which has chosen the term "Father" as expressing the relation of God to man. In our speculative but reasonable philosophical hypothesis, we find a world mind which is the ultimate source of our lives, and whose purpose our lives somehow fulfill. We may identify this mind with that of the God of the theistic faith, conceived as a Father who loves his children and is concerned to have them love one another. At the same time we may recognize that our world view gives us no ground for attributing omnipotence to the world mind, but suggests that mind (or subjective activity) has only limited control over matter (its objects). Our own subjective activity has only limited control over the physical order, and though the world mind may well have much more control than do we, there is still no ground for postulating omnipotence. The objective world order is the complement which makes one whole with the subjective activity of the world mind which is able to experience it, predict its course, and work its purposes in it. If we recognize that a *person* is the unified whole of body and mind, of subjective activity and objective process in mutual relation, then the world order is a Person, and the God of theism is a personal God in Whom we, as subsidiary persons, live, and move and have our being.[3]

[3] This type of philosophical theism is sometimes called "Panentheism." It has been ably defended in several books by Charles Hartshorne, who says of it: "Its chief recent representative among philosophers is Whitehead, but we trace it back to Plato, Ramanuja, and Schelling; and something like it can be found in most of the outstanding theologians of recent times—Berdyaev, Nygren, Niebuhr, and even, to a lesser extent, Barth." Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reese (eds.), *Philosophers Speak of God* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. vii.

The Destiny of Man

Finally, we are led to consider the idea of immortality. This is not a part of the simple theistic faith, i.e., it is not an essential part of the intellectual content involved in the attitude of devotion to a God of love, beyond ourselves and society, and supremely worthy of our devotion. It is an afterthought of that devotion, as is the concept of God as Father, i.e, as Source of our lives. But it is an afterthought which is almost necessarily implied in the concept of the love of God. To love means to seek to preserve and develop that which is loved. The love of God to man, therefore, means that He must seek to preserve all that is worth preserving in our personalities, and to give them further opportunities of development, if He can. That God loves man and requires us to love one another indicates that man's personality is worth preserving. The only question is whether God is able to do so. The theistic faith may therefore be taken as logically implying that we should *hope* for immortality. And philosophy would need to present strong negative arguments in its world view to make it reasonable to think this hope is vain.

Our discussion of what is implied in a reasonable world view would, on the other hand, strengthen the theistic hope. It indicates that our minds are systems of subjective activity rooted in that of the divine. They are interest processes in the mind of God which, for His good purpose, have been given opportunity for semi-independent development. They are not dependent upon the body and nervous system for their existence, but only for an instrument of effective action in the physical order. It is true that the interest processes that form a human mind largely consist of interests in the body and what can be done by the use of it; and such interests must cease to be effective at death.

Yet these interests and habits are, in large part, such as the mature mind may well discard with relief. The mature mind develops interests in intersubjective intercourse and inquiry, and in imaginative and aesthetic construction, which are of far greater importance. It is only necessary that there should be possibility of communication of mind with mind without the physical medium of the senses for this phase of life to go on.

In this connection recent experimental work with telepathy leaves little reason for doubt that this can occur even with our minds absorbed, as they normally are, in attention to sensory sources of information. When we are forced by death to surrender this, we may well develop those other means of communication to which only a few people are occasionally attentive now. There is, therefore, good reason to believe that the major part of our personality, our interests in the whole nonsensory range of existence, may survive death and form a nucleus from which further developments of personality may grow. Our modern psychological knowledge makes this a reasonable possibility. The theistic faith that God is love transforms it into a lively hope.

If we take together the pictures given us by the simple theistic faith and a world view which grows out of a recognition of the bipolar character of experience, then we see that this life of ours functions as a phase in the life and larger purposes of God. God is love. His nature is to create and care for beings who develop their individuality within His own. As the love of finite individuals is to gather other individuals to themselves as objects of thought and care and harmonious communion, so the love of the infinite [4] being is to create within Himself finite individuals who grow, by their own free choosing and with His constant care, into greater and greater thought, care, understanding, and har-

[4] I.e., "all-inclusive" and "everlasting."

monious communion with one another and with Him, approaching an ever-increasing union with the divine in which all opposition disappears, though individuality is not lost. The divine life is thus constantly enriched by the growing into harmony with Him of individuals who ultimately differ from Him only in that they each see the course of time from a different particular standpoint in its ever-growing history.

In this process, the objective world which we call material functions as medium of individuation. Life consists of planning, striving, achieving. If matter were completely amenable to the divine will, there could be no divine life, only a timeless state of being, and that being would not be love. Subjective activity requires an objective order that is somewhat resistant and only gradually malleable to its plans. Love, furthermore, requires that there be more individuals than one. It requires individuals that have grappled with the objective order in different times and places and become different, yet can communicate and become in thought and intention one. This is achieved in the divine life by preparing within the objective order a place where the material conditions are such that a finite, spatially and temporally localized, subjective activity can exercise a limited control. In exercise of that control it grows, multiplies and evolves until individuals capable of abstract thought emerge. Such individuals develop interests that go beyond the control of their bodies and of the surrounding world that serves the body's needs. They develop interests in one another's subjective activity, and in God, and in the beauty and truth of the world apart from its function as a means to their physical needs.

Thus the life of the body serves first to develop an individual that sees the world from a private point of view in world history, and then to enable that individual to reach

out in thought to become a system of interests no longer engaged exclusively with the objective world order, but with the development of relations of cooperation and communion with the wider order of subjective activity of which it is a part, seeing its world through other eyes than its own and shaping not merely a material, but an intersubjective or social order. Then, because these interests retain both objects and means of pursuing them after the body is left behind, the spirit (or system of interest activities of this higher order) survives bodily death. To it death is a release for a larger life.

In earthly life the interest system is dominated by attention to the normal channels of sense experience and muscular control. Even abstract thought and imagination cannot secure clarity except by means of the images which are spoken words. Purposive activity is concerned above all to secure the material means for its ends. Habits are inevitably predominantly egoistic in the sense of an extrovert egoism, even if not introverted. True self-understanding is limited because so much of the basic experience that underlies our motivation is impossible of recall, the channels of interest being dominated by concern with the present and the future, to the exclusion of rediscovery of the past. The more introverted a person is the more he needs such self-understanding and the less he is capable of it.

From all the external factors which tend to maintain such egoism and preoccupation death must come as a release. Even the psychopath will begin to relax and, as psychotherapy has shown us, with relaxation comes a flood of memory, with memory comes understanding, and with understanding a passing of the psychological tensions that distort personality. With release from external pressures and internal tensions will come a new interest in understanding others, a seeking of intersubjective intercourse

with an interest in the other, not in self-display and exercise of power. With growth in understanding of others must come forgiveness, affection and esteem. The process may well take time, long efforts at understanding, mutual aid, progressive communication and learning. It may be more difficult for some than for others. But the end should be the same for all—integration of the individual with the social whole of which he has been a more or less isolated part—integration, with a leveling up to appreciation of the best in the social whole. This should be the first stage in the growth of a mind released from the body that has been its medium of individuation. Beyond that we can envisage infinite possibilities of growth in understanding, and discovery of new ranges of activity, moving ever toward the culmination in which the individual attains complete harmony with the divine, his life enriching the divine life without tension or opposition, but with completeness in the vision of the ever-growing panorama of time seen from his unique point of view.

This picture is a logical deduction from our present knowledge of man combined with the faith that God is love. It will be criticized by some as not presenting a dark enough picture of sin and its need of punishment. Sin, however, is its own punishment, in the bitterness of spirit and regrets it causes here and hereafter. And most of what we think of as sin we now know is not merely the deed of the individual but of society and of forces beyond our foresight and control. It is God's purpose to overcome sin, and sin is not overcome by fear of punishment, nor is it purged by suffering. It is only overcome and purged by understanding and by love. These are the forces with which sin must be fought in this life. They are the forces with which the victory must lie in the life to come. This is the hope that is born of faith, as it is the faith that is born of penitence and love.

Chapter 7

FAITH AND TRADITION

Extraneous Influences upon Faith

Human life is lived in the midst of a social environment from the influence of which we cannot escape. For better and for worse, we are the heirs of all the ages. The concept of God embodied in the simple theistic faith has been resisted and emasculated because men have been unwilling to accept its full ethical implications. It has been tragically distorted and fantastically embellished by ignorance, superstition, prejudice, wishful thinking, and pride. Though presented in its fullness and strength, and in relative simplicity, in the teaching of the New Testament, it is, even there, by no means free from embellishments and distortions due to associations from the past; and to these there have been additions in the intervening centuries. Today we are often presented with a choice—to accept or to reject this whole theistic tradition. Dogmatists on both sides would have us believe that these are the only really logical alternatives. They view the tradition as a living whole, a tree which should be preserved or destroyed, but which it is arbitrary to prune. Our analysis, on the other hand, would claim that it is not a living whole, but rather analogous to a tree overgrown with parasites. What is called for is not a pruning of the overlush development of a single organism, but the clearing away of alien growths that tend to strangle and distort the precious life on which they feed.

In brief, our thesis is that once its ideas are grasped, the

simple theistic faith enunciated at the conclusion of Chapter 5 tends to arise spontaneously from the practice of attention to conscience; that any further ideational implications of this faith (including those of our last chapter) are unessential, tentative, and few; that inconsistent distortions and arbitrary embellishments of it have their roots in different and often antithetical motives; and, finally, that rejection of the simple theistic faith is due either to its traditional confusion with these inconsistent distortions and arbitrary embellishments, to inadequate attention to the sort of experience in which it tends to arise, to the inconclusive but impressive intellectual influence of opposing philosophies, or to antithetical motives. Is is our task in this chapter to examine the tradition in which the faith has been developed and preserved, and to distinguish what is vital and wholesome in it from those factors involved in the most serious distortions and injurious embellishments.

First we should mention those distortions that come from the usually innocent and laudable attempt of intellectual curiosity to find answers to its questions and the need to relate these to the convictions of the theistic faith. These may be summarized under the headings of the influences of rationalistic philosophy and magic. Philosophy in the prescientific era was much more inclined than it is today to hold very dogmatically to certain views which seemed to be based on unquestionable principles of common sense. And in the prephilosophical era human thought was apt to leap very confidently to magical conclusions based on false analogies. The effect upon theism of doctrines thus developed has always been unfortunate, but it is particularly so when, as has so often happened, these ideas have continued to affect religious thought (because of the paucity of intellectual checks in this region) long after they have been abandoned in other spheres.

The Influence of Magic

The earliest form of religious thought which we can trace seems to have been the concept of mana. Development from this through the stages of animatism and animism to the polytheism of a hierarchy of nature deities is intelligible as almost inevitable.[1] The idea of mana is that of a vague, intangible power which imbues and transcends magical and religious objects. From the localization of this power in physical objects, and its semipersonalization, sprang animatism, which looked on certain inanimate things, such as a totem pole or a river, as alive and possessed of magical power. Animism is the stage when this intangible power, in its semipersonalized forms, is regarded as capable of movement independent of the physical objects to which it is normally attached. The totem pole and the sacred river are no longer magnified nonnatural men, but the special seat of a spirit-power, full of mana, which resides there. Polytheism is developed when the forces of nature are explained as due to the operation of such spirit powers, now highly personalized, which dwell in them. The pantheon of nature deities is also apt to be complicated by survivals of totemism and the addition of hero deities.

The investigations of the well-known Oxford anthropologist, R. R. Marett,[2] indicate that the idea of mana arises from the powerful psychological impression of tribal ceremony upon the primitive mind. In tribal ritual and dance the effect of crowd psychology is manifest in its most intense form. The tribesman feels himself overwhelmed,

[1] See John Murphy, *The Origins and History of Religions* (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1952); and A. C. Garnett, *A Realistic Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1942), chap. iii.

[2] R. R. Marett, *The Threshold of Religion* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1914); and *Faith, Hope and Charity in Primitive Religion* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932).

transported, uplifted, filled with a strange power, confidence, loyalty, and unity with his fellows. The power that exerts this influence is intangible but real. It is in the ceremonies and everything connected with them. This is mana. The connection of mana with the moral life of the tribesman arises from the fact that the ceremonies themselves perform a moral function. They are expressions of tribal unity, loyalty, courage, and hope in the face of common dangers and difficulties and the divisive forces of egoism. Their effect and conscious purpose is to instill these virtues into the tribe. The tribesman feels a better man, and, in particular, a better tribesman, for his part in them. The objects believed to be filled with the mana that exerts this effect therefore become objects of moral veneration. The ceremonies become definitely religious, i.e., expressions of an attitude of devotion to something beyond the self regarded as supremely worthy; and this "something" is the intangible power that lifts up their hearts and gives them unity, courage, and strength.

The idea of mana falls short of the God of theism in that it is not personal and its moral influence is limited, like that of the moral concern of the primitive, to the welfare of the tribe or clan. It also proliferates into a lush growth of superstition from which the essential religious elements in the simple faith of theism are only slowly distinguished. The idea of a mysterious, intangible power, having once developed, is used to explain all mysteries, though completely divorced from ethical associations. And because the experience of it is invoked by dramatic symbolization in the ceremonies it is believed to be controllable by such methods in all its supposed manifestations, moral, nonmoral, and immoral. The result is the development of magic in all its forms, and the mingling of magical conceptions with those of religious faith in an object supremely worthy of devotion.

The association of magic with religion has been a subtly destructive influence which survives into the present day. As a pseudoscience, magic has been used in the effort to secure fertility of the soil and of animals and to heal diseases. As a pseudoreligion it has been used to secure obedience to the moral law and to avert the evil results of breaking the law. The second of these two religious uses tends, of course, to defeat the former. Primitive taboos rely on magic to enforce obedience to moral rules; but the primitive, with or without the help of a witch doctor, can also rely on countermagic to fend off the results of breaking the taboos. Ancient Egyptian religion, which taught a wholesome ethical code and supported it with concepts of rewards and punishments in an after life, also developed magical methods, administered for a price by the priests, to avert the just judgment of the gods. The effect, as pointed out by Breasted,[3] was a dulling of the Egyptian conscience which stultified the further spiritual development of the nation. Magical and semimagical means of nullifying the effects of sin, such as sacrifices of atonement and priestly absolutions, must inevitably have this effect of dulling conscience. Sin is, obviously, something that doesn't matter much if God can be persuaded to overlook it so easily.

It is magic, chiefly, that brought with it authoritarianism in religion. It created the priesthood, as intermediaries between God and man, with all the power which that status put into their hands. The priests are those who understand how to use the magical means, and they have received by initiation or birth a peculiar right to use such means. Ordinary persons are therefore dependent upon them. Their power becomes a vested interest for the perpetuation and increase of reliance on magic. The priest persuades himself

[3] J. H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933).

that he can and does wield this power for the good of the people, to maintain the moral discipline, but the more the people rely on him and his magical means for their right relation to God the duller become their consciences, the less they are aware of the constraining presence of God, and the more their "religion" becomes irreligious, a pursuit of personal salvation instead of a devotion to a God beyond the self.

The tendency to utilize the idea of mana to explain all mysteries also led to the powers of nature, good and evil, becoming confused with the vaguely conceived object of religious devotion, the power of which was felt in moral experience and (confused with other factors) in the ceremonies. In polytheism the idea of the religious object has taken personal form but is confused with the forces of nature, and the function of such deities as wielders of the powers of wind and rain, heat and cold, growth and decay, becomes much more prominent in the minds of men than their function as support of the moral will and source of the moral law. This leads to the confusion of the spiritual function of symbolic acts of devotion with the idea of thereby seeking favors or averting disaster. Further, since these beings are moral agents, it also leads to the activities of nature being interpreted as expressions of moral approval and disapproval. Thus the gods become creatures more to be feared than loved, and to be honored more for their power and glory than for their goodness and justice. The true meaning of religion is almost entirely submerged in extraneous and conflicting conceptions.

This combination of magic and primitive rationalistic philosophy brought the idea of miracle into religion. This notion, however, has tended to survive the rejection of most other magical elements because of the important psychological effects of religious faith upon functional disorders

of the body and, through creation of peace of mind, confidence and interest in life, on the general recuperative powers that affect even organic lesions. Among a people ready to believe in the supernatural, religious faith works apparent miracles. The ministry of Jesus, for example, produced many remarkable cases. The excited imagination of witnesses and reporters exaggerate such happenings and rumor adds other quite impossible stories. The harm thus done is not merely to burden religion with incredible traditions. Its worse effect is the support such miracle stories give to the creation of rigid dogma out of any teaching with which they are associated, thus supporting authoritarian systems of thought and authoritarian institutions.

Problems Raised by Philosophical Rationalism

Monotheism developed chiefly through the recognition of the ultimate unity of the moral law as applicable to all mankind, from which followed the unity of the divine source of the moral law. A secondary factor was the gradual recognition of the ultimate unity of the order of nature.[4] It was, apparently, the first factor that developed the monotheism of the Hebrews; the second factor was more influential in the philosophical monotheism of the Greeks. The combined effect was to create the idea of the absolutely omnipotent deity, source of the moral law and supreme ruler of the forces of nature, author, alike, of good and evil, except so far as the latter could be attributed to human sin. Theology thus was faced with the problem of evil. How could a God of justice and of love inflict upon man the

[4] The growth of empires which asserted the supremacy of their own chief god over all others is often mentioned as a third factor, but this subordination of all gods to one is quite different from the monotheistic denial of any god but One.

burden of suffering he bears and distribute it in a way having little or no relation to moral desert?

It is important to realize that this problem arises from philosophical accretions to the simple theistic faith which have no relation to its foundation in experience. Even if God had no power whatever over physical nature, there would still be all the reason we need to love him supremely. He is immediately known as the power that constrains human beings to love one another. We do not want compulsion. We do need constraint. If we respond to that constraint then most of life's problems solve themselves and there is a joy in life that gives strength for most of its remaining vicissitudes. And if society in general were to respond, there would be little physical evil with which it could not cope. Thus the God who constrains us to love one another is worthy of our full devotion even if this life were all and He had no other power. This is the simple faith of theism. There are, as we have seen in the previous chapter, good reasons tentatively to extend that faith to some further views of God's power and hopes for man's destiny, but these views and hopes, and even less, the belief in His powers of creation and omnipotent control of nature, are no essential part of the theistic faith.

The doctrines of creation and omnipotence are accretions to theology that come from a philosophy, motivated by a natural rational curiosity, working with the commonsense concept of causation—a concept justifiable in its application to particular physical objects and events, but not applicable to the universe as a whole or to the establishment of the most general laws of its operation.[5] The philosophies that extend this concept of causation to problems of cos-

[5] The argument which applies to a whole, as a whole, a concept found applicable to every particular within the whole is known in logic as the fallacy of composition.

mology are philosophies of prescientific common sense. Their arguments for the existence of an intelligent First Cause, ultimately responsible for nature and its laws, are now rejected by most contemporary schools of philosophical thought.

Yet these arguments, which once seemed so cogent, have saddled traditional theology with a concept of God which made Him logically responsible for all the evil of the physical world and forced theology to try in vain to explain that evil as a necessary discipline of the moral life, or a justifiable punishment for sin. The result has been to transform the concept of the God of love, the Father of the prodigal son, into that of a Being who, for His own glory, creates myriads of sensitive and inevitably erring creatures, proceeds to discipline them with undiscriminating violence and often extreme harshness, and punishes them with unrelenting intensity. This is the picture of God derived from contemplation of the world He is supposed to have designed in every detail and created. Yet, in spite of reason, faith still whispers, "God is love." A partial respite from the dilemma is gained when the theologian asserts that eventually God will show His love by transforming those who love Him into angels of light. Then this ray of light is also darkened. Because it is obviously so hard to love Him as he is depicted in this theology, we must be frightened into trying at least to act as though we do; so we are told that those who do not (and that includes most of us) will be condemned to eternal torment.

It is in this way that traditional theism has become a strange mixture of the antithetical motives of fear and love. "Perfect love casteth out fear." [6] But fear also casts out love. Thus the rationalistic, legalistic, and punitive elements in theology war against the life of faith, hope, and

[6] I John 4:18.

love which is the essence of religion. They tend to put in its place an authoritarian institution inducing obedience by the motive of fear. In Christianity the opposing motives of fear and love have been held together in the one system of thought by dividing the personality of God, so that He is, in one personality, the just but fearsome judge, in the other the loving Savior of mankind. The result, for simple-minded Christians, is expressed in the words of the child who is reported to have said, "I love Jesus, but I hate God." Those of greater maturity and intelligence try to reconcile the contradiction in the concept of God the Father by remembering that He is orthodoxly depicted as, in spite of his omnipotence, beset by a dilemma in the necessity of being both loving and just, and that he sacrifices His Son to solve it. It is nevertheless the case that the love and devotion of the Christian tends to be directed toward the person of the Son rather than to the austere and forbidding majesty of the Father.

The Blight of a Punitive Theology

A tragic feature of the legalistic and punitive element in Christian doctrine is its tendency to introvert the personality, thus defeating the wholesome extroverting tendency of faith and love. Where the doctrine of divine punishment is so emphasized as to create in the believer a fear for the salvation of his soul attention is inevitably turned inward upon the self. He is made to give chief attention to the thought of his own sin and virtue. The major end of everything connected with religion becomes his own salvation. He is taught to love God and his neighbor. He may succeed in doing so—at least in loving the Christ who saves him. But in so far as his own soul is his chief concern, his love of his fellow men is stifled. He cannot joyously forget

himself in the service of God and humanity. His religion becomes narrow, personal, harshly moralistic, and otherworldly. If he persuades himself that he is one of the elect, or sufficiently virtuous, or a secure son of the Church, this satisfaction with himself tends to develop spiritual pride. If he does not so persuade himself his religious life becomes one of fear and trembling, of severe and narrow moralism. He never learns that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace . . ." [7]

An example of this latter type is the tragic figure of Sören Kierkegaard. He was raised in a pietistic tradition which placed a tremendous emphasis on human sin and divine wrath. His childhood and youth were deeply impressed by a stern and melancholy father who believed himself accursed because of a childhood sin. As a result his theology is dominated by the conviction that "Christianity with the terror removed is merely a Christianity of the imagination." [8] Such an upbringing in a young man of genius naturally issued in a severe introversion, a sarcastic, superior, and unlovable disposition, an early atheism, and a completely unsuccessful attempt to live a life of pleasure. He recovered his faith through a reaction of disgust and dissatisfaction with the pursuit of private happiness and through the one fine and tender thing in his life—his attempt to restore spiritual comfort and hope to his father in his old age after having received from him the confession which revealed the secret of his melancholy.

The recovery of faith meant a transformation in his way of life, but the inward twist of his personality and the dismal form of his theology blighted all prospect of the flowering of faith into trust and hope and the love that issues in a

[7] Gal. 5:22.

[8] Sören Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 524.

social concern for the welfare of his fellow men. His conception of Christianity is a travesty of the vision of the teacher who told the stories of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. "Christianity is spirit, spirit is inwardness, inwardness is subjectivity, subjectivity is essentially passion, and in its maximum an infinite, personal, passionate interest *in one's own eternal happiness*" (italics ours).[9]

The development of a predominant tendency of concern for one's own eternal happiness is a blight on the spiritual life almost as severe as that of a similar concern for earthly happiness. Its mitigating circumstance is the teaching that the way to attain eternal happiness is the practice of love toward God and one's neighbor. The attempt to maintain this practice has an extroverting effect. The Christian believer in whom the doctrines of sin and punishment have established these contradictory tendencies finds his religious life painfully devoid of that love, joy and peace which his religion tells him are the fruits of the spirit, and which he believes he ought to experience. This failure deepens his concern for his eternal welfare and has often issued in the spiritual distress of which much famous religious autobiography is full.[10] It is a condition for which the religious life only finds a remedy when trust and love of God, expressed in active work for man, bring about a reorientation of personality.

Legalistic Ethics and Vicarious Punishment

This conception of God, as a judge administering punishment for sin, we have traced to its source in the rationalistic philosophy which made Him omnipotent ruler of all

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

[10] For a discerning analysis of this state of mind, see Georgia Harkness, *The Dark Night of the Soul* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945).

the forces of nature. This led to the conception of the evil of nature as a divine discipline and punishment. Involved in this conception, however, there is also another piece of bad philosphizing, namely, ethical legalism. This is the interpretation of the moral law on the analogy of the laws of the state. It is a first principle of legislation that to every law must be attached sanctions and means of enforcement. Otherwise, it is ineffective and meaningless. Similarly, it was thought that the moral law requires both sanctions and a power to enforce them. So this must be the function of God, and He would be derelict in His duty if, through softness of heart or favoritism, He allowed any to escape.

The moral law, however. is more akin to the laws of nature than to civil law. All laws are uniformities. Natural laws are the unbreakable uniformities of natural processes. Civil laws are breakable, but are uniformities demanded by authority and supported by sanctions. Between these two types of uniformity are conditional principles—uniformities or laws that are breakable, but only at cost of certain consequences which occur with statistical frequency or with unbreakable uniformity. Of this type are the laws of health and growth, and the laws of success in human endeavor. Moral laws are laws of the healthy growth of personality. They can be broken, but only at the cost of spiritual stultification. This is the meaning of the supreme importance of loyalty to the critical conscience as a principle of conduct. Without such loyalty, personality is stultified and loses its integrity. This consequence is not a penalty imposed by divine authority to uphold the law. It is an ineluctable natural effect.

Moral laws therefore need no sanctions. Indeed the threat of sanctions is worse than useless as a means of securing adherence to them. For the basis and essence of all moral law is the attitude of agape, productive love. And

fear does not create love. It tends to produce introversion. The purpose and function of God in human life, therefore, is not to enforce the moral law by inevitable sanctions, but to influence man's decisions in harmony with it by winning his love.

Within Christianity the legalistic conception of the moral law has created a tragic misconception of the function of Jesus Christ in the history of religion. There can be no doubt of the enormous influence of his personality on the course of history, an influence exercised through his effect upon individuals. Those individuals found that the contemplation of his life, teaching, and personality wrought a transformation in them. It made them aware of the presence of God, called forth their love of Him, and gave them a sense of trust and confidence. They held a legalistic conception of the moral law according to which they felt that, as sinners, they had incurred God's condemnation. The Hebrew tradition had taught the making of atonement through blood sacrifices. Greek religion suggested appeasing the gods with gifts. Yet a sensitive conscience could not be satisfied with such subterfuges. The great Hebrew prophets and the best Greek thinkers had protested against the thought that the justice of God could thus be turned aside. People of sensitive conscience therefore could not but be uneasy at the thought of the divine majesty. Yet somehow, marvellously, Christ brought peace to their souls. He did not blind them to their shortcomings. Rather, he made them more than ever conscious of these. But he made them feel the presence of God, respond to it in love, and in that love find strength and peace.

What had he done to them? Our analysis of the religious attitude provides the answer. It was the content of his teaching and the example of his life and death that stimulated the critical conscience to a fuller and keener

awareness of the duties of the moral life, making them aware of a constraining presence within. It had, at the same time, given them the stimulus to respond to the ideal, a response in which they found joy. Both this experience, and his teaching of the love and forgiveness of God, created the response of love toward God in which they found new strength, an inward peace, and further joy. They found they could live in communion with God in spite of their frequent failures to realize the ideal Christ kept alive in them. Without shutting their eyes to their own imperfections they knew that they had found the power to grow in grace. Truly, Christ had wrought for them an atonement between man and God.

Yet a legalistic ethical theory found a theological problem in these facts of psychological experience. How could God forgive sinners when it was His duty to punish sin? It was the ingenuity of Paul that found an answer in the theory of a vicarious atonement. The death of Christ was sacrificial and substitutionary, like that of the scapegoat to which the sins of the people were ceremonially transferred, and the unfortunate creature then driven into the wilderness to die. This magical atonement and that of all the other blood sacrifices were symbolical anticipations of the really legally adequate vicarious sacrifice made by Jesus Christ, and they might now be abolished as no longer needed. The sinless one, Jesus, had taken upon himself the penalty; and God might accept this, as a judge may allow one person to pay another's fine. The penalty paid by the one sinless man was adequate for all mankind because it was due to the sin of one man, Adam, that sin had come into the world, passing a taint of "original sin" to all his offspring, a taint which made their subsequent sinfulness inevitable.

Ingenious as this theory is it is ethically unsound even on the basis of a legalistic ethics. To impose the death

penalty on an innocent man, and let the guilty go free, even though the innocent one offers himself voluntarily for the sacrifice, is not justice, but injustice. Where the penalty is one of death or imprisonment the case is quite different from that of a fine. Property may be passed by gift, and the gift may be made and used to pay a fine. Where the law requires a penalty suffered in the person, however, the law is not upheld unless it is suffered in the person of the one who commits the crime. Further, the use of the idea of original sin to explain why the sacrifice of one innocent man may be accounted as paying for the guilt of all mankind is also illogical and immoral. If all the rest of the sins of mankind were rendered inevitable by the sin of Adam, then the law of God requiring the same penalty for these inevitable misdeeds as for the really avoidable one of Adam is unjust. Indeed, justice would require, not penalties, but merely preventive and reformative measures for the subsequent wrongs. On the other hand, if the sins of the rest of mankind were not all inevitable after the sin of Adam, then the paying of the penalty of Adam's sin could not justly compensate for all the later independent sins.

The Meaning and Method of Man's Salvation

If Paul had had the insight to see that the moral law is not analogous to civil law he would have seen that he was worried over a pseudoproblem. God is not in the position of a judge whose duty it is to enforce laws, and the moral law does not become meaningless if those who break it can be saved from the usual bad consequences of doing so. The moral law is rather analogous to the laws of health. It *is* a law of spiritual health. God's problem is, precisely, how to save man from the bad consequence in his spiritual life brought on by his breaking the laws of spiritual health.

To save man he must be brought to see what is truly worthy of his supreme devotion and won to the love of it. In terms of the theistic faith, he must be brought to see that God is love and be won to the love of God in return. It was this that Christ did for Paul, and that was why Paul found a salvation of his soul in Christ, a new spiritual birth that the legalism of Judaism had not given him. It is a tragedy that the survival of legalism in his thought made him unable to understand what the knowledge of Christ had done for him. For this he cannot be blamed. Others, too, had experienced the "saving" power of the personality of Christ without understanding it.

If Paul had had the advantage of hearing the teaching of Jesus at first hand, he might have seen the true solution to his problem. For the ethics of Jesus, even as it has come down to us through reporters who did not thoroughly understand it, is free from legalism. The whole duty of man is summed up in the principles of the Golden Rule and love to neighbor, not in specific precepts such as the ten commandments. The prodigal is forgiven without question when he returns penitent. The woman taken in adultery is not condemned, but told, "Go, and sin no more." [11] The evil is found in the hatred and lust that lead to murder and adultery rather than in the overt acts. The publican who repents is said to be more acceptable to God than the much better-behaved Pharisee who manifests neither penitence nor spiritual aspiration. The angels are said to rejoice more over the penitence of one sinner "than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." [12]

Clearly, it is not actual conduct, the keeping of the law, which is chiefly a result of habit and environment, that

[11] John 8:3–11. This story is a late addition to the fourth gospel, but is so typical that it can be accepted as probably a genuine tradition.

[12] Luke 15:7.

Jesus saw as the deepest concern of God. Rather, it is the attitude of love toward the morally constraining Presence within; an attitude manifest as much in the penitence of the sinner as in the virtue of the saint. For penitence manifests the awareness that something is wrong with the inner attitudes; and at the same time it shows that the desire is present to make an effort to put it right. The deadening inertia of self-satisfaction can manifest itself at high levels of legally correct habit as well as at low. But only where such self-satisfaction is broken through is there spiritual life, sensitivity, and progress. This was what the personality of Christ had done to Paul, to make a new, better, and greater man of him. This was the "salvation" that had come to him. He knew it had been wrought by faith and love, not by "works of the law." If he had understood that the whole meaning of righteousness is not legality, but love, he would have found no problem in it.

Priest, Prophet, and the Idea of Revelation

We have examined the corrupting influence upon the simple theistic faith of three factors entirely extraneous to that faith itself and independent of the experience on which it rests, namely, rationalistic philosophy, magic, and legalistic ethics. We must now come to examine a corrupting factor which is not entirely extraneous, but is largely a misinterpretation of the religious experience itself. This is found in traditional conceptions of revelation. One type of alleged revelation found in traditional religion is definitely of extraneous origin. It comes from magic and the resultant activities of the priesthood. This is divination. It can be dismissed as superstition. Its one important survival in Christianity is the claim to papal infallibility made by the Roman Catholic church. The really significant con-

cept of revelation, however, comes from another source, from the prophet rather than the priest. The priest is a professional intermediary between God and man by reason of his special knowledge and initiation or birth. The prophet is one who spontaneously has heard what he believes to be a call of God to preach some message which is distinctive and relatively new to him and his hearers. He preaches it under a compulsion of his conscience because he believes it is right and true, and somehow God-given to him to preach. Often he meets with opposition. He may be exiled, stoned, or crucified. But eventually he wins a following. His writings, or those in which his teaching is recorded, come to be venerated as containing, or perhaps verbally constituting, a revelation from God.

This notion of specific revelations contained in historical documents, more or less accurately preserved, is typical of all the great traditional religions. Together with philosophical rationalism, magic, and priestly authority, it is the basis of the dogma and authoritarian institutionalism of the Roman Catholic church. For Protestants, who reject magic and priestly authority and make no claims for philosophical rationalism, it is the sole basis of authority. Protestantism's insistence on the right of private interpretation of the scriptures, however, greatly mitigates the element of authoritarianism that derives from this source. It is further reduced by the insistence of most Protestants that the authority of the New Testament (so far as it is recognized as authoritative) has replaced that of the Old. For Fundamentalists, however, questions of ethics, doctrine and church practice must still be settled by appeal to these scriptures.

The traditional reliance of Protestants on the authority of scripture, maintained now only by the Fundamentalist sects, was destroyed for all others by the critical study of

biblical sources carried out in the last three quarters of a century. This has shown that biblical history, of both the Old and New Testaments, contains much that is unreliable and mythical, that few if any biblical writers make for themselves the sort of claims to inspiration that orthodoxy has made for their works, nor can any such claims be justified. Thus the whole basis of authoritarianism in the Hebrew-Christian religious tradition has collapsed.

To many this seemed to mean that the whole idea of a revelation of God must be abandoned. The teaching of Christ and the apostles could have no deeper basis of insight than the metaphysics and ethics of contemporary philosophers—and less basis in logic, science and history. Faith appeared to be a product of wishful thinking which intelligent people had to examine critically, and support if they could, by scientific and philosophical inquiry. Some went for such support to rationalism, others to empirical methods in philosophy. Liberal Protestantism became very unsure of its foundations and its content. It tended to abandon theological thinking. It kept itself alive by turning with zeal to the practical side of religion, which found expression in the social gospel. It tried to justify its faith with the arguments of probablism, creating a new and hesitant rationalism. Protestantism had relied so long for its knowledge of God on a false theory of external revelation that the reality and significance of the internal revelation were almost forgotten.

It is a tragedy that the power of a magnificent tradition should be enfeebled because its history is inevitably mingled with error. The story of the prophets of the world's great religions, particularly those of the Hebrew-Christian tradition, is the story of the critical conscience of mankind working toward its culmination in that vision of man's duty toward his fellows expressed in the principle of agape, of

universal productive love. Throughout its development it has received its vigor from that conviction of theistic faith that the source of the demand which the critical conscience feels, the demand to consider the welfare of others equally with one's own, lies in a moral power beyond man and society.

If this conviction of theism is accepted, then we cannot but agree that whenever the prophet, in his moral struggles, came out with a solution that expressed more completely than its rivals the principle of agape he was justified in his announcement, "Thus saith the Lord." We also must admit that without the great seers who came with such pronouncements man's ethical insight and achievement would have remained on a low level. We do them no honor to perpetuate the errors in their teaching. Yet we must ourselves be blind if we do not see the justification of their claim to come to us with a message of God. With the culmination of that message, in the agape taught by Jesus, clear in our minds, we can sift the wheat from the chaff in what they have said. We can honor them and share in their great historic fellowship while carrying on the activity of the critical conscience, inspired by love of the God whose love they have taught us how to see. By such loyalty and understanding the strangling tentacles of extraneous growths may be removed from the simple theistic faith, its validity maintained, its implications clearly seen and its power in human lives raised to a new level.

Chapter 8

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Christian Theories of Revelation

The core of historic Christianity is the simple theistic faith. We have stated that faith in terms derived from Christian texts. Christianity has also understood and taught certain concepts which we have seen to be reasonable implications of the simple theistic faith. These include the concepts of God as source of our spiritual being (the fatherhood of God), the personal survival of bodily death, and the revelation of the will of God in history through great prophetic figures who have seen the true nature of the constraining influence of that will more clearly than their contemporaries. These concepts, however, have been overlaid and more or less distorted by extraneous influences, as we saw in our last chapter. The last concept in particular, that of the revelation in history, has been almost smothered by additions deriving from myth and magic. These, as preserved in the Bible and hallowed by application to it, as a book, of the concept of historical revelation, have become the chief source of authoritarianism and sectarianism in the Christian religion.

Biblical authoritarianism has, however, now been abandoned by all save the Fundamentalist sects and Catholicism. The question is, therefore, as to what significance for Christianity lies in the concept of a historic revelation, as implied by the simple theistic faith, once the concept of Biblical authority is surrendered. As has already been

mentioned, Protestant liberals, in rejecting traditional views of the Bible, have frequently found themselves bereft almost entirely of the concept of a revealed religion. This has occurred because, during the centuries of Biblical authoritarianism, Christianity had no clear and adequate conception of a general revelation of God available to all. The distinction between the critical conscience and the traditional conscience had not been clearly drawn. The Pauline conception of the conscience of the Gentiles as a law of God "written in their hearts" had been interpreted in the Catholic doctrine of natural law as a set of specific rigid principles, and in modern thinking this had been abandoned, along with all claims to self-evident moral principles. Protestant orthodoxy concluded that the "image of God" in man, which should have given him insight into the divine will, has been effaced by original sin. Protestant liberals, rejecting this idea of effacement of a divine image, often inclined to the view that man has no moral insight at all that can be regarded as a revelation of the divine will.

In this state of confused thinking, with its resultant weakness, a reaction has occurred in Protestantism which has sought to find new support for the principal specific doctrines of the historic Christian creeds in a reinterpretation of the manner of the revelation of God in history. This interpretation accepts the results of Biblical criticism, but still claims a very special content of revelation through the historic personalities of the Hebrew prophets, Christ and his apostles, and the subsequent history of the church —a revelation attested to only by the individual's vivid impression of being therein "confronted" by the divine. This new approach has had an important influence in reviving the emphasis on personal religion. It has, however, made faith the more difficult for many by insisting on the retention by faith of doctrines opposed, rather than sup-

ported, by the balance of rational evidence. In the "encounter" with the divine, to which it appeals as evidence, it has mistaken feelings due to the associations of religious tradition and institutions for an experience justifying faith's acceptance of alleged historic revelations. It has thus claimed too much for special revelation in history. At the same time, it has failed, as we shall see, to recognize all that is really present in the general revelation open to all.

We shall examine this new concept of historic revelation as presented by Professor Emil Brunner,[1] one of the most distinguished representatives of the movement. The Church, says Brunner, is the witness and herald of a revelation which has taken place and is still taking place. In opposition to the scientific point of view, which refuses to accept as truth anything that cannot be proved and verified by experience, the Church "proclaims as absolute truth that which can be neither proved by the intellect nor verified by experience" (p. 6). Yet it is the duty of the Church to reflect upon this revelation, for in the past she has proclaimed as "revealed" truth matters which scientific research has shown to be erroneous—and with results disastrous to faith. For the apostles and prophets "divine revelation" always meant "the whole of the divine activity for the salvation of the world" (p. 8). The Church, however, made the mistake of regarding the human documents, the Scriptures, in which the story of revelation is told, as themselves constituting the revelation. She created the false concept of a divinely revealed *doctrine* in place of Christ himself who in his person is the true revelation. Doctrine is always a human interpretation of the revelation which is given, not in words, but in the mighty "acts of God" (p. 8).

[1] From *Revelation and Reason* by Emil Brunner, copyright 1946 by W. L. Jenkins, published by The Westminster Press. Quotations in this chapter with pages indicated in parentheses are from this work.

The Distinction of Historic and General Revelation

In the Biblical understanding of "revelation," Brunner continues, the term means that something hitherto a mystery is made known. It is the communication of something particular, unique, and historical, the communication of a redemption which "can happen only once for all" (p. 31). We can be blind to the revelation. It is received by faith, which is an act of recognition and obedience arising in and with the abdication of the self. Faith is a venture of trust in the Person of Christ, not a belief in doctrines about him. The God who is revealed in these mighty "acts," and above all "in the Person of Christ," is "absolute and sovereign *Lord*" (p. 63), but also absolute and self-giving Love.

Man, to whom the revelation comes, is, in the Biblical view, a sinner, disobedient to a "general revelation," distinct from the specific historical revelation by which the way of salvation is opened to him. "Those who speak of sin and deny the reality of an original revelation do not know what they are doing" (p. 53), for the concept of sin as disobedience implies an "original primal revelation from which man is always falling away" and which is still something "present." This original and present revelation against which man sins is the "*imago Dei*," the law of God "written in the heart." It is also the revelation of God in the natural Creation in which man lives.

Here Brunner quotes Acts 17:27, "that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him though He is not far from any one of us." Yet, in spite of the assertion of this text that *through this general revelation men may find God*, Brunner asserts that, according to the Biblical doctrine, they cannot do so without the special revelation recorded in Biblical history. Certainly he can

quote texts which seem to convey this meaning, such as Acts 4:12, "for there is none other name . . . whereby we must be saved." But logically he should either admit here a contradiction of Biblical doctrines or reconcile them (as has often been done) by admitting that man can find God through the general revelation, while still asserting that man's sinfulness is such that salvation in a *complete* sense is only made possible through Christ. Instead, we are told that "once man has become a sinner the general revelation is not sufficient to enable him to know the true God, . . . the general revelation exists but . . . it has no saving significance" (p. 75). Yet when Paul says that men can *find* God, he surely implies that they can *know* that it is God they find! And when he says that the Gentiles who "do by nature the things contained in the law . . . are a law unto themselves" (Rom. 2:14), he surely implies that *some degree* of salvation is possible for them in this way. It would seem, therefore, that at this point Brunner hardly does justice to the Biblical doctrine of the "general revelation." Paul is much less harsh than many Pauline theologians.

Professor Brunner also says that "The reason why this general revelation cannot have any saving significance for the sinner is that in it God, as Person, does not meet man personally, but impersonally" (p. 76). Here again he betrays a failure to appreciate the profundity of Paul's teaching. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). If God's will works in us, then God does meet us in the depth of our own selves as Person to person. For what is will but personality? For the conception of revelation held by the church that created the New Testament we may also refer to a fourth gospel text. The life "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9) is not an abstract idea of right and wrong. It is the operation of the divine *life*, the

divine *will*, within us—within every man. This is where we can *find* God, and know his will, if only we "feel after him." The racial inheritance and individual growth of impulse and habit that constitute our *finite* individuality tend to blind us to the working of the divine will within us; but it is there. And they who seek Him can find Him.

Our present vision is only possible because we are heirs to a great tradition. God is revealed in every deed of love, in the life of every good man, and above all in the prophets and the Christ of the Hebrew-Christian religion. Without a revelation of God in history such as this, we should never have guessed the depth of love for ourselves and for all men in that will of God that thus forever confronts us. We should never have seen the heights to which it calls us. In emphasizing man's need of the historic revelation recorded in the Bible, as well as the general revelation ever present with us, Brunner is profoundly right. We need the revelation in history to open our eyes to the revelation within. But in denying that God is in man, that in the general revelation He personally confronts man, and that His will is fully revealed to all who open their eyes to see, Brunner fails disastrously to do justice to the Biblical doctrines of God and of man.

This failure to see the true nature of the *imago Dei* as the form of the divine will working within man, as implied in the simple theistic faith, has disastrous consequences. It accounts for the undue pessimism of the whole theological movement of which Brunner is such an important exponent. That pessimism is now eating out the heart of hope in churches faced by terrible problems and needing some faith in their fellow men lest they despair of free institutions and resort to authoritarianism. It is flinging the churches to the side of conservatism just when they should be giving a bold lead in the development of political freedom and economic cooperation.

For a time this pessimistic view had a certain salutary function in offsetting the optimism that thought man to be all-sufficient without God. What is needed is a recognition of the true relation of God and man, which shows that the moral law making man responsible for the welfare of his fellows *is* the will of God, that man carries a load of racial and individual drives and habits that run counter to the will of God, but that God is so present in man that man can never be satisfied with himself until he brings his will into harmony with the will of God, that, therefore, in spite of his weakness, man can learn by his errors to walk humbly with his God. In this conception there is no false optimism, and no false pessimism. Instead, there is realism, warning—and hope.

Another harmful effect of this failure to understand the nature of the general revelation of God in man is that it leads to an unjust view of the adherents of non-Christian religions. There is a certain forbidding arrogance in the theology that flourishes the text—"none other name." [2] It is also really disastrous to its own assertions concerning the dependence of man on God; and it dishonors God by narrowly limiting his "mighty works" for the salvation of man. Was it by a human insight, divorced from all direct relation to God, that Socrates was able to declare that "it is better to suffer injustice than to commit it"? Or was it God in him that enabled him to see it? Was it by his human moral strength alone that he chose to drink the hemlock rather than abate one jot or tittle of the principles for which he stood? Or was not this, too, one of the "mighty acts of God"—and one that helped to prepare the mind of Greece to receive the greater revelation of God in Christ? Is there any "mighty act of God" prior to Christ so much mightier than this that we should see God at work

[2] Acts 4:12.

in it and not in the life of a Socrates? It is surely plain that nothing but an emotional bias created by a traditional theology could drive a theologian to assert the reality of God in the Biblical preparation for Christ alone, and deny that God is genuinely, though not completely, revealed elsewhere in history. It is true, as Brunner says, that there is much that is false and sinful in non-Christian religions. But so there is in Old Testament religion and in the religion actually taught and practiced by the Christian Church.

The Witness of the Spirit to Historic Revelation

There is much that Brunner has to say on this matter that is very important and in complete accord with the simple theistic faith. He endorses the Pauline dictum, "No man can call Jesus Lord save by the Holy Spirit" [3] (p. 170). This means that neither Christ, nor the Bible, nor any creedal doctrine can be recognized as revealed of God apart from "the witness of the Spirit" within. The question is, therefore, To what does the Spirit bear witness? Brunner rightly says

> It is not the Book which carries Christ, but Christ who carries the Book, and He carries it *only so far as it bears witness to Him* (p. 176, italics ours). The Holy Spirit does not guarantee the truth of world facts, whether historical or cosmological (p. 175). The faith which requires submission either to dogma or to the Bible as a book is a "false faith." True faith . . . is the divinely effectual miracle that man, through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, becomes able to see the truth of God in Jesus Christ. . . . This faith . . . is the coming to birth of a *new* person; it is the rebirth, the restoration of the defaced image of God (p. 184).

These statements may be accepted so long as caution is maintained concerning what is meant by the witness of the

[3] I Cor. 12:3.

Spirit to a doctrine of Christ and to the Book. Even within the limits of the words italicized above, it must be remembered that the Scriptures contain much unjustifiable interpretation of Christ and fallible human reporting of his biography. Nevertheless the Scriptures contain a clear portrait of the person of Christ; and it is to the God-revealing character of this personality that the witness of the Spirit responds. Much that Brunner says, however, concerning the content of revelation—his references to "atonement," "creation," "salvation," "the defaced image of God," "objective facts," "Incarnation," "none other name," the "absolute and sovereign Lord," his limitation of God's self-revelation in history to the Hebrew-Christian tradition, and his general support of creedal confessions—would imply that the witness of the Spirit goes much further than this. This is due to the fact that his failure to recognize the immanent activity of God in man leaves him with a very vague notion of what may be called the work of the Spirit of God in creation of a living "saving" faith (the faith that makes our spirits whole) and this intellectual vacuum is filled by the emotional influences upon thought of Christian institutions and tradition.

Brunner comes close to the conception of the divine immanence presented in this book when he speaks of "the connection of this form of revelation, which opens up our hearts, with the fact that our human heart has been created in the image of God" (p. 172). But then he adds, "all that remains of this, as a consequence of sin, is an undefined sense of responsibility" (p. 173). This last statement, however, is simply a contradiction of the psychological facts. Man also *loves* his fellow men. Except where driven and blinded by special prejudice, he *desires* the good of his fellows. Except for special prejudice and selfishness, he *seeks* their good, and the critical conscience demands that

he seek the good of others equally with his own. What then is man's love of his fellows and his critical sense of duty but a will that is in the *form* or *image* of the will of God? This may have been only partly grasped by the writer of the opening chapter of Genesis who first used the phrase, but it is clearly in the mind of the author of the fourth gospel and of Paul. For the apostle, indeed, man's good will *is* the will of God. "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

This, then, is the witness of the Spirit within us—that God is love and that we ought also to love one another. Man, of course, begins his life without consciousness of this witness because he is not even conscious of the existence of other selves. He inherits impulses and develops infantile habits that run counter to it and blind him to it. This is the element of truth in the doctrine of original sin. But the Spirit of God within man convicts him of sin if he reflects. This is the divine-human "encounter" of which Brunner speaks. It is the "confronting" of man within himself by a will that is other and higher than that which he familiarly recognizes as his own. The response to that constraining will which sees it and accepts it as transcendent and universal love is the response of the simple theistic faith. Inevitably it is interpreted in the light of traditional beliefs which need to be critically sifted lest they distort and stultify the vision or clothe it in garments that make it incredible. At the same time we must cherish the tradition and understand it, for it is only in its light that we today see the vision of the love of God in its fulness—or see it at all. The true nature of the will of God as universal redeeming love is made manifest in the person of Christ. If we let our minds dwell upon him, then the Spirit of God within us bears witness to this revelation of God in Christ. Many factors, volitional and intellectual, then affect the

issue, but in the Christian response the self surrenders its opposition. It acknowledges that it has no right to maintain any preserves where self is first, no right to set up any limitations to the love of fellow men. The Spirit of God, which has ever been present and at work in the soul, now recognized as transcending all human life, is set up in the place of acknowledged authority. As Christian experience has declared, the Holy Spirit makes its presence felt in a new way. The lust of the flesh and the pride of life may still lead to sin. But sin is acknowledged for what it is by the soul that has humbled itself because it has caught the vision of the love of God in Jesus Christ.

If we thus understand the "life" that is the "Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," the true nature of the witness of the Spirit," we can see what that is to which the Spirit bears witness and how "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (II Cor. 5:19). We see that *the special historical revelation can never exceed the content of the general revelation,* for it needs the witness of the Spirit to declare that it is a revelation of God. We see that what is revealed in the person of Jesus and by the Spirit of God within us is the same, and is very simple: *that man is loved of God; that we ought also to love God and one another; that in such love our spirits are made whole.* That is the whole content of revelation. It is apprehended by faith; by faith it is believed to be the revelation of God; and man needs no more. With this revelation of God and His will to inspire and guide him, the rest can and must be left to human choice and human intelligence.

The Personality of Jesus

For Christians, Jesus is the "Christ" and "Lord" and "Savior." These terms have been filled with magical,

philosophical, and legalistic content which we have now set aside. Our problem, for the understanding of Christianity as a historic religion, is as to how the personality of Jesus of Nazareth could come to mean so much to the people who knew him that they believed these things of him, and how the picture they left of him continues to exercise such an influence that it sustains such belief. The question is not one as to the origin of the magical, philosophical, and legalistic beliefs, which are mere accretions to theistic faith, but as to what there is in the personality of Jesus and the New Testament picture of him that has the power to create this faith that makes whole the spirit of man. The accretions are not a part of that power, but a drag upon it. Somehow, *through* the knowledge of the personality of Jesus, there is created in men and women an attitude which makes a difference in their lives so important that they are ready to call it their "salvation." This attitude, as we have seen, is that of the simple theistic faith, involving love to God and man. They are "saved" by faith in God, but, being brought to that faith *through* the influence of Jesus, involving a faith in many ways similar, they say they are "saved" by faith in him—as, indeed, they are.

In the legalistic theory of the atonement the emphasis is laid on the death of Jesus. This is because Paul was concerned, not with how his acquaintance with Jesus had wrought such a transformation within him, but with how any transformation in him could justify God in forgiving his sins. When we set aside this pseudoproblem, created by the legalistic theory of the moral life, and ask the primary question as to how the personality of Jesus works this transformation in man, we find that his loyalty unto death—even the death of the cross—is an essential part of that which makes him "the power of God unto salvation." Man

has no duty to do that which is either physically or psychologically impossible. The demonstration of an ideal of duty therefore requires, not only the teaching of the ideal in the abstract, but the manifestation in practice that it is possible for man to live up to it. That manifestation could only be given in conditions of supreme trial. In the circumstances of his life and time that trial was inevitable. He was preaching doctrines of universal love, of God's forgiveness toward sinners, of man's freedom from the onerous burden of ceremonial law, of the transformation of society in a coming "Kingdom of God" to be brought in by divine power when prepared for by repentance in human hearts. These teachings aroused the hatred of those in authority, whose lives and doctrines he criticised, and fear that his preaching should create a disastrous public disturbance. This hatred and fear presented him with the choice of abandoning his prophetic mission or going on until he met crucifixion. He chose the latter, and there could be given no more convincing demonstration of the power of the love of God in a human life.

Christian theology has weakened the impact of this demonstration by its exaltation of Jesus into a being of more than human spiritual power. It has tried at the same time to save it by an insistence on his true humanity. The admitted contradiction in the theological "mystery," however, inevitably has the psychological effect of lowering the appreciation of his human achievement and weakening its psychological effect. Yet the record is faithful in its depiction of his human weakness amid human strength, even to the preservation of that cry which theology has rendered so enigmatical, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" [4] This becomes intelligible when we remember what we have seen to be the source of the sense of the presence

[4] Matt. 27:46.

of God. To feel that presence man must be aware of the constraining influence of the critical conscience and recognize it as the constraint of a universal transcendent love. To feel that constraining influence attention must be turned outward from the feeling states and prestige states of the self to concern for human welfare. To become absorbed in oneself is to lose the sense of an other and higher will than one's own. It is no matter for surprise that even Jesus had this experience when, in the impotence of crucifixion, unable to help himself or others, his attention became absorbed for a time in his own pain.

Jesus as Savior

To remember the source of the experience of the presence of God also enables us to understand the peculiar significance of the personality of Jesus in what Christianity calls the "saving" of souls. The constraint of the critical conscience can only be felt when attention is turned outward from the feeling states and prestige states of the self and becomes concerned with the welfare of others, and critically aware of our own frequent failure to make our due contribution. This is achieved to some extent by everyone. We tend, however, to become complacent, excusing our selfishness by comparing it with that of others and developing moral self-satisfaction. Persons of a relatively high level of character are apt to develop spiritual pride. In this way society as a whole is apt to settle down into a condition of spiritual stagnation. This can only be broken by something that forces individuals, particularly persons of the better type of character, to become self-critical. This happens often when the complacency of society tolerates the development of social evils that threaten it with collapse. But the presence in social thought of the memory of the personality of Jesus, and the homage paid to his

spiritual leadership, have become an ever-present power in our social life, warring against spiritual stagnation, and stirring a leadership in every generation which is conscious enough of its own shortcomings to feel the call of God to the service of mankind.

For the individual and for society, therefore, the personality of Jesus has proved to be the power that can break down the last psychological wall that hides the face of God from man, spiritual pride. It is a condition that is always with us, both inside religious movements and without. In Jesus' own day he found it characteristic of the most zealously religious sect of the times, the Pharisees. All too often in history it has come to characterize the descendants of those who have initiated truly significant religious, moral, and social reforms. It consists in self-righteous satisfaction with a moral condition easily attained by good training and good breeding in the respectable circles of society. It leaves the individual unaspiring and contented with himself, and usually also contented with the social order which supports him in his comfortable superiority. But no Pharisee, nor any other person, can measure himself by the moral stature of Jesus and remain self-satisfied.[5] It was this influence which St. Paul found as "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."[6] It is this influence which produces, in every Christian generation, that "salt of the earth" which preserves our society from moral corruption, or, in periods of stagnation, has become a spark to light again the fires of spiritual life.

The reason that Christians came to call Jesus "Savior" is, therefore, the fact that they found in him their spiritual

[5] This assumes, of course, that the picture of Christ in the synoptic gospels is a broadly accurate outline of the impression he made on his contemporaries. If it is not, his early influence and the development of the picture is historically unaccountable.

[6] Rom. 1:16.

salvation. To those that knew themselves to be sinners, and by reason of their consciousness of sin could find no peace in their souls, he brought peace and the consciousness of the presence of God in spite of their sin. By winning them to see in that condemning conscience the constraining influence of universal and transcendent love he brought them the sense of God's forgiveness and a new power to fight against sin within. To those who had believed themselves righteous he brought a consciousness of their immaturity and spiritual stagnation, the stirring of a deeper and stronger spiritual life, which filled them with a high purpose for the service of God and man, and made them look back on their previous complacency as a condition "dead in trespasses and sin." At the same time he kept them humble and aspiring, conscious of God's forgiveness, aware of their need of Him, able to find joy and achievement in His service.

With this consciousness of a new spiritual life and power for the earthly pilgrimage there went the assurance of the life everlasting. The "salvation" of which they spoke therefore carried the double connotation. It was for here and hereafter. This faith in the life hereafter rested on the assurance of the forgiveness and love of God. It was by a tragic distortion that, under the influence of beliefs derived from rationalistic philosophy, magic and theories of specific verbal revelations, the future salvation came to be thought of as a salvation from the wrath and punishment of God. It thus came to have a negative emphasis and made otherworldliness play much too large a part in the concept of "salvation." These elements, of course, need to be expurgated from Christian theology. They turn attention away from the real experience of spiritual renewal and revitalization. That experience, however, is to be encountered by the Christian of the present day, as in the past, when

through contemplation of the personality of Christ he is brought into fuller realization of the presence of God; and it carries still its valid hope to lighten the valley of the shadow of death.

Jesus as Christ and Lord

It is not without justification, then, that the Christian church has recognized Jesus as "Savior." Can we say the same for its recognition of him as "Christ" and "Lord"? At this point the Christian tradition is beset by ideas of miracle and magic, and the critic who recognizes this cannot help but feel inclined to cast aside the whole tangle of supernaturalism. This was bravely done by that band of honest and intelligent thinkers who formed the movement known as Unitarianism. Yet the fate of Unitarianism should give us pause. It is a movement that has had great intellectual and material resources, yet it has not had the vitality to make progress commensurate with its opportunity. It had abundant allies in the science, philosophy, and biblical criticism of the nineteenth century, yet has manifested little power to win converts. Nor has it developed the capacity to cultivate an intensity of the spiritual life and zeal for service such as is manifested by another small body, the Quakers. Evidently the rejection of Trinitarianism cast out something in traditional Christianity that gives vitality to the religious life.

It is evident that the personality of Jesus has more power to become a savior in the spiritual life of man when he is thought of as "Lord" and "Christ." His being "Christ" or "Messiah" marks him as playing the central part in the providence of God in history. With this view goes the conception of God held by the Hebrew prophets, as actively interesting Himself in human life, working with man to

save him from self-destruction, disciplining a nation and a church to be the means of the salvation of the world, and calling upon individuals to fulfill a mission for mankind. It is a picture which brings God close to man and makes the believer a coworker with God in His purposes. In presenting Jesus as the Christ it makes him the central figure in the fulfillment of those purposes, gives him a place of leadership, makes him the center and the rallying point of a mighty movement in which the individual believer can feel he has a place. In calling Jesus "Lord" the Christian recognizes that in this man of Galilee and Calvary God is present in a peculiar way and that in drawing close to him in love and loyalty one is drawing close to God.

How God could be present in the life of Jesus of Nazareth was a mystery, as it was also a mystery how God could be present in the life of the believer. Yet the religious experience of the Christian required that these incomprehensible things should be accepted as true. A verbal solution was found by speaking of Jesus as the Son of God and of the divine influence in the heart of man as the Spirit of God, or Holy Spirit. God was manifest to man's experience in two different ways—in Christ and in the constraining power within. Yet He had to be thought of as transcendent and beyond all human form. The idea of an anthropomorphic and purely transcendent God in the heavens above could not do justice to man's experience of God. Yet He must be thought of as One. To recognize a multiplicity of gods would be a backward step.

What made this experience of God incomprehensible was that God had to be thought of as personal; yet a person, as understood by common sense, is a single individual private center of experience, each personality completely distinct from every other. Philosophy stated this common-sense view in the doctrine of the soul as a simple, indi-

visible substance. How then could one God be three persons? Indeed, the omnipresence of the Holy Spirit seemed to require an enormous multiplicity of persons, though theology never consented to that!

The Truth in Trinitarianism

In the controversy between Trinitarianism and Unitarianism the Unitarians chose the side of logic and claimed that since God is one, He must be only one person. Trinitarianism left the logic of the problem as a mystery and clung to the evidence of religious experience that God is manifest in the human person of Christ and somehow, vaguely, in the Spirit whose presence other humans may feel. No solution could be found until philosophers gave up the common-sense notion of the private, individual consciousness and the doctrine of the substanial soul that went with it. Only when we think of reality as process rather than substance does the mystery become intelligible. Personality, we now see, must be thought of as an integrated system of interest processes. One personality can have several subsidiary centers, or subsidiary personalities, if its organization of interest is differentiated into relatively independent systems not in full communion with each other. The mind of the universe (or of God) must be a vast and varied interrelated system of systems of interests. The distinction between human minds and the divine must be understood as a distinction between subsidiary and relatively independent interest systems and the universal system in which they arise. Human minds, in their finiteness and ignorance of the ultimate purpose of the whole, often behave in ways out of harmony with that purpose. The divine mind is, in one sense, the all-inclusive whole; in another sense, it is the ultimate and basic purpose of the

whole. Whatever we see of mind or purpose that is true to the ultimate and basic purpose of the whole is a true expression of the divine mind.

The insight of the Christian who saw in the mind of Christ a true expression of the divine was therefore profoundly correct. The myth, magic, miracle, and mystery can be set aside. We can see why Jesus has impressed us as in a distinctive sense divine, a true son of God, and, by reason of his place in religious history, *the* true Son of God. There is an element of metaphor in both forms of statement, but the symbolism is profoundly true. Likewise, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit takes on intelligible and acceptable form, for we, as subsidiary organizations of mind within the universal mind, cannot but feel the constraining influence of the ultimate will and purpose from which we are derived. From these experiences of the divine our thought passes to the universal whole of which our minds are a part, and we arrive at the conception of the eternal and universal Person in whom we live and move and have our being, a conception which early Christian thought sought to state in the concept of the first Person of the Trinity.

Thus understood, we see that Trinitarian theology has striven to do justice to the facts of religious experience in spite of a common-sense notion of personality, and a philosophical doctrine of substance and attributes, which made that experience unintelligible. The Unitarian insistence on the logical implications of the common-sense concept of personality was sound, as was its rejection of the miraculous and magical. But the logical use of an incorrect concept led to a false conclusion and a failure to recognize the manifestation of God in history. Trinitarianism, abandoning logic and tolerating contradiction and mystery, became entangled in magic and miracle, but the myth it created

contained the germ of truth. What was needed was not an abandonment of logic but a better psychology. With that to aid us, we can see that the reason why Christianity has found a saving power in the thought of Jesus as Lord and Christ is because, in the light of the simple theistic faith, that thought is found to be profoundly true.

The Old Evangel: A New Understanding

It is not a new evangel that is needed by the modern world, nor is it simply a return to the old in the exact terms in which it first was stated. It is rather a better understanding of the spiritual realities embodied in the ancient evangel and portrayed in terms of mingled myth and history. What is needed is the evangel which points man to where he can find God and wins him to the love of God.

There have been times in history when it has appeared to many that man has no real need of God. But those have been times when society has been living on its spiritual capital. Such were the eighteenth century and the latter half of the nineteenth. The former ran along smoothly by means of the principles and the dynamic inherited from the Protestant reformation; the latter drew its directives and power from the spiritual revival of the first half of the century. But the eighteenth-century enlightenment ran to wreck in the horrors of the French revolution, and the confidence of later nineteenth-century humanism has been shattered by two world wars and two totalitaian tyrannies. Today, even those who find it difficult to believe in God are coming to see that human society cannot do well without Him.

In the earlier part of this study we saw the reason why. Man needs a God to serve. The human psyche is wholesome only when its interests are predominantly extroverted

and unified. It must find its progressively unfolding ends, the ends in which it finds temporary satisfaction and new impetus, not in doing something to itself, but in doing something to an object beyond itself; and these satisfying ends must be unified in service of some supreme end. That supreme end must be sufficiently attractive to dominate all others, sufficiently rich in its possibilities to draw out all the potentialities of the individual life, and yet so single in its nature as to integrate them all. Furthermore, if human society is to be an integrated whole, then this supreme end must be essentially the same for all; the "god" that each man serves must be the God in whose service all men can find fulfillment, or the service of his "god" will set him at some point against the true welfare of some or all of his fellows.

Without a God worthy to serve, man's extrovert interests are apt to become one-sided, confused, conflicting, and weak. But still worse, he is apt to become more or less introverted. The feeling states of satisfaction, which should function merely as a directive and stimulus to active interests in the objects and affairs of his environment, begin to absorb attention. The states of the self, the prestige and power and sensory gratification in which those satisfied feelings are found, become the ends predominantly sought. Pride and sensuality become the dominant motives, in place of wholesome constructive interests in the affairs of the world. And out of pride and sensuality grow hatred, harshness, unwarranted fears, lust, and greed.

From these dangers man is saved if he has a high God to serve with true devotion; he must find something beyond himself that he can recognize as more worthy than self, which he can learn to love more than he loves himself. This is religion. Ethics alone is not enough. It teaches him to love his neighbor *as* himself. But this can still leave

him divided between the balanced interests of self and neighbor—with the strong tendency that self will win. Thus the second of the two great commandments requires the support that comes alone from obedience to the first. Man must love his God first, that thereby he may find it in him to love his neighbor consistently and well. And he must love his God, not as he loves himself, but with all his heart and all his strength and all his mind. Then he can rejoice in the conviction that God loves him; and he will find that spontaneously he loves his neighbor whom God also loves; and he can even safely (without introversion) love himself equally with his neighbor, loving himself not as an end, but as an instrument in the service of God.

Outside the theistic faith there is no god that can meet this human need. It is not impossible that a man may love his family, or his nation, or his work, or an institution, or some good cause, more than he loves himself. Thus he may be saved from introversion, but at the risk that his peculiar devotion may set him in conflict with men who serve other but equally worthy gods, may blind him to the needs of some who are not served by serving his god, and may cause him to starve the development of some part of himself.

To some extent, as we have seen, the god of humanism can meet this need, but only partially and with little power. For man cannot make himself love humanity because he believes he ought to. Love does not grow in response to effort of will. It grows only in spontaneous response to that in the object of love that wins it. There is much in human life that wins our love, but much also that repels it. To love Humanity is not to love all the concrete human beings, with their hatreds and divisions, but to pity them, and out of pity to frame a hope and an ideal for them. Humanism is the love of an ideal framed by man for other men. It is the response of good men to that which is best in them.

The theist must see it as a response to God without recognition of him. It is a noble and a beautiful thing with a touch of tragedy in its blindness and its fragility. It has some power to keep good men good, but none to make bad men good. It cannot save sinners, for a man must first have gone far with love of his neighbors in the concrete before he can develop a love of all humanity in the abstract. It can arise and live only in an environment that creates good men and enables them to enjoy their goodness. It flourishes in an era of serenity created by a period of spiritual revival that has temporarily solved its problems and spent its force, but it has no medicine for the sick soul, no dynamic to revitalize a disintegrating civilization.

Only the God of theism, then, can answer man's need of an object of supreme devotion. Only in the love of God can the faltering human spirit be made whole. But to love Him we first must find Him. And to love Him well we must learn to know Him. We cannot gain knowledge *about* Him of the kind we have in science, but we become aware of a subtle *acquaintance*, and we grow to know Him as we grow to know the feelings of a friend. It is a knowledge that grows by the mystic sense of communion, by sympathetic insight, and by faith; and, being a knowledge of spirit in action, it is tested by its power to guide the spirit to fulfillment of its needs. No man can live without the awareness of that Presence which constrains and condemns him. But if he does not recognize it as God, he may hate it. Or, without recognizing it as God he may love it, as the humanist does, without the inspiring vision of faith. But with that vision he can grow both in the knowledge of God and in love of God and in the spiritual power that comes from the union of his spirit with the Spirit of God.

Yet this growth in grace is not by the power of man's own will. No man can create love in his heart by his own

act of will. Love cannot be commanded. It has to be won. Man first becomes aware of God as a commanding Presence within. It commands him to respect the rights of other men, to do toward his neighbor the deeds of love whether he love him or not. Before the majesty of the moral law and the commanding Presence he feels behind it man stands in awe. He learns the fear of the Lord, and in fear he serves Him. In that service he finds inward peace and surprising joy, and gradually he grows to rejoice in the law of the Lord and at last to love the Lord his God with all his heart. In love he obeys the will of God, and he may think that his love itself is an act of obedience to the divine command. But it is not. He has not loved God of his own good will, but God has *won* his love by His striving within him to turn him from the ways in which he would only destroy himself to the ways in which he can find inward peace and lasting joy. Man's love of God is but a response to the love wherewith God first loves him.

By the constraining Presence of His Spirit within, God is ever seeking to win the love of men, and those who respond in love become instruments through whom He can seek to win the love of others. Because "it is God which worketh in [us] to will and to do of his good pleasure," we can say that God is revealed in every good deed and in the life of every good man. Particularly is God revealed in the life and teaching of those prophetic souls who have seen the meaning of His love more clearly than others of their age and preached a new and higher concept of His will. Orthodoxy has not erred in finding here a divine revelation, but in sometimes failing to distinguish the divine from features that belong to the human medium, and in failing to recognize the divine as truly, though less clearly and fully, present elsewhere. Nowhere in ancient times has God found a people more ready than the Hebrews to be

persons in whom, and instruments through whom He could seek and find the love of men. Sensitive to the divine Presence, their prophets grew to hear in the moral law the voice of God. Responsive to that voice, they saw its meaning in man's need to love his God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself. This ideal, however, they set forth as God's command, as though man should obey it by his own act of will. They sought to obey this high command and felt their failure as a condemnation calling for some act of atonement. For generations they lived as a people of the law, striving to serve God, but conscious of something missing, that something was yet to be revealed of Him.

That which waited to be realized was the fullness of the love of God, ever patiently seeking man, seeking him and loving him even in his sinfulness. This was the knowledge of God that was needed to win the love of sinners, that in the response of love to God they could find a new power to overcome sin. The Spirit of God striving within man makes all men cognizant to some extent of His righteousness. In the succession of the prophets the Spirit of God had gradually been able to make those most attentive to Him aware of the full meaning of that righteousness and begin to understand His love. But the world had to wait for Jesus Christ for one who could grasp the full meaning of His love, and, grasping its meaning, respond to that love, so that in his life and thought there could be manifested the true life of the divine and the fullness of divine love. It was a vision too bright and a challenge too high for the world of his time, and they crucified him for it. But that, too, was a part of the revelation of divine love, for had he not had to die to be true to it the fullness of its meaning would not have been revealed to us.

As with so many other truths that long have been dark to us, once they are pointed out, and we see them, we see

them clearly and we wonder why we have not seen them before. So with the revelation of the love of God that comes to us through Jesus Christ. Once we see it through the eye of faith we see it clearly. God can then have no other meaning for us than that of a God of redeeming love. The love of God, revealed to us through Jesus Christ and witnessed to by the Spirit of God within us, calls forth from us, if we do not strive against it, the response of love to God, and love to God bears fruit in love to our fellow man.

This was what the apostle found when he learned of Jesus. It is the experience he tried to understand and boldly declared as the great new evangel. It is an experience that thinkers of today must also try to understand, and understanding may declare in words through which ring the echoes of the apostle's voice.[7] "For I am not ashamed of the ancient story of Christ, for it is still the power of God unto salvation to them that heed it, to the children of tradition first, and also to the children of the enlightenment. For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through science knows not God it is God's good pleasure through the simplicity of the gospel story to save them that respond in faith. Thus, while the children of tradition seek for signs, and the children of the enlightenment seek for scientific knowledge, we preach Christ, and him crucified, though the children of tradition have made his life a stumbling block and the children of the enlightenment regard it as foolishness; but to them with an ear to heed God's call, whether children of tradition or of the enlightenment, in Christ is found the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

[7] Paraphrasing Rom. 1:16 and I Cor. 1:21–24.

Chapter 9

THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC

The Law of Love and Secondary Principles

The basic concept of the Christian ethic is that same law of universal and impartial love which is also basic in the simple theistic faith. This involves the interpretation of the moral life as fundamentally existing in the endeavor to produce the conditions of human welfare for all, rather than in conforming to a number of specific moral principles. This is known as the teleological, as distinct from the formalistic, standpoint in ethics—an ethics defined in terms of ends or consequences rather than a set of formal principles. Such an ethic is both more far-reaching and more flexible than the formalistic type. No set of principles defining specific types of action, such as murder, theft, truthfulness, and almsgiving, can specify all the duties and ideals of human conduct; and any attempt to do so involves rigidities which may become contradictory, harsh, and absurd in special circumstances.

The teleological viewpoint is a mark of an advanced stage of ethical thinking. Ethics begins with the recognition of a few specific principles, mostly negative, such as those of the ten commandments. It was by an insight of great significance, rare in ancient times, that Jesus declared that all the law hangs on the two great commandments of love to God and one's neighbors,[1] making the specific

[1] Matt. 22:40. See also Paul's affirmation, Rom. 13:8–10.

principles of the law secondary to and dependent upon the aim involved in love of God and human kind.

Jesus' mode of statement of the teleological point of view in ethics clearly indicates, however, that he did not conceive it as devoid of principles. It is quite inadequate simply to state that questions of right and wrong must be decided by reference to consequences for human welfare. It must be admitted that what constitutes human good (or welfare) must be decided by common sense and scientific investigation, and may change in each particular case. However, common sense and scientific investigation cannot answer the question as to with whose good we ought to be concerned, and whether any one person's welfare should always be recognized as *equally* important as any other. A teleological ethic, therefore, has to decide for or against the principles of universality and impartiality, for a narrow ethic of class or race preferences may be teleological in form. This is the question which, as we saw, was left undecided by the secularistic and humanistic approaches to ethics. What sort of community do we regard as ethically satisfactory? Does it, or does it not, permit of arbitrary distinctions of race, nation, class, creed, or sex? The answer requires an ethical decision expressing the fundamental "feeling" of the moral consciousness. To this question of basic principle the reply of Jesus is emphatic. He extends the meaning of the principle "Love your neighbor" to include "Love your enemies"; and he illustrates his meaning with the story of the good Samaritan who played the part of love to a stranger of enemy race under circumstances involving considerable inconvenience and some danger to himself. This affirmatively answers the question as to universality. The question of impartiality was already answered in the injunction to love each one "as thyself."

In addition to the basic principles of universality and impartiality, Jesus' statement of the teleological point of view implies a place for principles of secondary generality—the moral laws that "hang upon" the law of love. Thus conceived, the moral law spells out the implications of the law of love for certain specific human relations. It means that man must honor his parents, respect the lives and property of his neighbors, and so forth. At the same time, it goes far beyond these injunctions. Furthermore, since they are explicitly set forth as owing their validity solely to the law of love, all problems which arise in the attempt to follow the secondary principles may be resolved by reference to the primary. If it be necessary to rob one man of his property to avoid taking the life of another, then an equal love to both will justify the preference for the saving of life. This is the Christian solution of the problem of absolutism and relativism in ethics. The law of love is absolute; all other moral laws are relative to it. This repudiates the unqualified relativism of secularist ethics and takes its stand firmly for the principle of universal and impartial good will. At the same time, it repudiates the rigorism which would make absolutes of principles of secondary generality.

Relativism and Absolutism in Christian Ethics

Recognition of the relativity of the secondary, or dependent, principles of the moral law is not, however, without its problems. It superficially suggests that moral laws, recognized as generally valid principles defining human rights and duties, may be set aside and violated for the purpose of creating conditions of human welfare which involve goods that are believed to outweigh the injury done in the breaking of the moral law. This is usually described as the

doctrine that the end justifies the means. It has been used to justify religious persecution, violent revolution, aggressive warfare, torture, political assassination, oppression, and injustice of many kinds. The methods of communism in furtherance of the proletarian revolution are the outstanding contemporary example of the application of this doctrine, but they are by no means the only one.

In reaction to such abuses of the conception which recognizes that specific moral laws are secondary principles which function for the primary purpose of promotion of human welfare, there has been a tendency to insist that the absoluteness of the secondary principles is required by the primary principle. This is done in the Thomist doctrine of the moral law as "natural law." It recognizes that the purpose of all moral law is to promote the good, but asserts that its principles are nevertheless absolute and can be discerned by the rational moral consciousness. This raises the problems of rigorism—the conflicts of principle in special cases, and the occasions when great harm would be done, or great opportunity for good lost, by rigid adherence to specific moral principles. These have to be dealt with by the methods of casuistry, defining and redefining limiting principles attached to the general principles. The more this is done, however, the clearer it becomes that no principle can be regarded as absolute except the basic and primary one—the teleological principle of impartial good will to all, of agape or productive love.

It is impossible, then, to claim intuitive awareness of any set of specific moral principles as embodied in the nature of man. The most we can do is to start from the principle of universal and impartial love and inquire what form of social order it requires us to support. From the common needs, desires, capacities, and weaknesses of man, we can then proceed to frame a set of rights and duties

which, as specific principles, need to be generally upheld by any society that could be satisfactory to the basic moral purpose. These rights and duties constitute the basic moral laws which can be seen to "hang upon" the general principle in the sense that they are so important to the structure of an orderly society, such as would satisfy the law of love, that *they should never be violated except in particular cases where the keeping of the one law would involve the breaking of another.* In such cases we must, by the law of love, choose the lesser of the two evils. The moral laws are thus to be held as not to be violated for the promotion of human welfare or the prevention of ills, but only in avoidance of the breaking of another moral law which, *in the particular case,* is more important. The relative importance of rights and duties in each such particular case have then to be examined in the light of the law of love, the ultimate teleological ethical principle.

The question of what human rights and duties constitute moral laws in this fundamental sense does not raise serious difficulties. Such laws must include the principle of obedience to the duly constituted laws of the state, avoidance of those crimes condemned by the laws of almost all states, fulfillment of the common duties of the family, and respect for all those human rights essential to normal development of human personality. Where there is hesitation as to whether respect for a certain alleged right or duty should be regarded as a moral law it will be because it is of relatively minor importance to human welfare. In cases where it conflicts with a very important moral principle the solution will be clear; and in cases where the conflict is concerned with minor issues only it is not serious. The serious problems arise, not in trying to decide whether a moral law is involved at all, but in deciding which is the lesser evil when two clear and important moral obligations so conflict

that it is impossible to perform both. The decision then has to be made in the light of the law of impartial love. Even then, what is important for the moral integrity of the individual is not that he should *succeed* in correctly assessing the conflicting values, but that he should *do his best* to do so impartially in the light of all the evidence, and act accordingly.

The Problem of Collective Action

There has been a tendency in Christian theology to describe as sin all actions and tendencies to action that are contrary to generally recognized moral principles, whether such actions are avoidable or not. This is manifest in the concept of original sin, which applies the judgment of sin where it is recognized that there is no rational responsibility. It also appears in the self-accusations of those who find themselves in the position where they have to choose between two or more actions each of which, considered in itself as an overt act, is contrary to some moral law. Only an arbitrary legalism in ethical thinking can account for such mental confusion. No individual is morally responsible for that which he could not have foreseen and averted by any voluntary action rightly responding to what he knows. And when a person, in a situation where every possible choice contravenes some moral law, does his best to avert the greatest evils by choosing the least, then he does right, not wrong. The term "sin" carries with it the connotation of blame, of guilt, and should never be used to refer to conditions where there is no responsibility, or where a person has not been faced by a choice between right and wrong, or where a person has done his best to avoid doing wrong.

These considerations are particularly relevant to problems of collective action. Man must live in society. To withdraw from society and leave it to sin and suffer without doing all one can to help and to improve it is wrong. That is the error of monasticism. But in society one is a part of a social order which is imperfect, one must participate in an institutionalized life, the institutions of which are often wrong. It is a duty to protest against what one believes to be wrong in these institutions, to use all one's influence to improve them, and to try to direct their activity to produce as little evil and as much good as possible. Day to day decisions, however, have to be made with the institution as it is. These decisions have, often, to be collective. One may oppose a proposal which he believes to be wrong, but when the collective decision is made one may be faced with the choice of abandoning the institution or cooperating in the collective action one believes to be wrong. This is the position of the trade unionist who does not think a strike is justified, of the politician who disagrees with a decision of his party, of the business man who thinks his firm has set its prices too high, of the citizen who finds his country involved in a war he thinks it could and should have avoided.

In such situations it is often very difficult to decide whether the lesser evil is to abandon and oppose the institution or to cooperate in its collective action while doing whatever may be possible to influence for the better its future choices. The abandonment of the institution and refusal to cooperate usually appears as the more obviously right action—being an adherence to a specific moral principle—and is usually the more heroic; but its ultimate consequences may be worse than futile. It may also mean the neglect of many other duties and loss of the opportunity to exercise further influence for good. In such difficult and

involved decisions each person must decide according to his own conscience and respect the conscientious decision of the other person, but the decision cannot rightly be made merely by considering specific rules, nor by asking what the ideal of conduct would dictate if all members of the institution were willing to follow it. The mixture of good and evil in one's own institution and group, as well as in other and opposing groups and institutions, is what creates the problem. It cannot be decided by reference to specific moral rules, but only by judgment of what is best in the specific situation; and in that situation moral rules and social institutions are only a part (though the major part) of the total number of factors to be considered. The two guiding principles which seem to follow from Christ's conception of the relation of the moral law to the law of love must be applied: (1) There should be no departure from clear moral principles so long as it is possible to avoid breaking any. (2) If that is impossible, then, in the light of the law of love, one must do that which is least destructive of human welfare.

The Collective Use of Force

There are two human institutions which, in particular, seem by their essential nature to contradict the law of love. Both, however, are necessary, and what makes them necessary is the existence of human tendencies to sin. The first of these is the state in its primary function of protection of its members from violence. The second is the institution of property.

Individuals are apt to commit violence upon one another both individually and collectively. The state is an organization, prepared to use force for mutual protection from such violence, whether it comes from individuals and

groups within the state or from without. The use of force for self-protection is an unideal method. The law of love would prescribe longsuffering, forgiveness, forbearance, turning the other cheek. Where an individual with spiritual strength is faced by another individual of little or no greater physical power, and therefore has the opportunity to choose between the two methods (of physical resistance or forbearance and love), the latter is the better and nobler way, provided it does not involve a failure in the duty to protect others. If it is made clear that submission is made from moral principle and love and not from cowardice the wrongdoer himself is apt to be influenced for good. In any case it is a spiritual triumph for the individual who chooses the way of love. This is the meaning of Christ's doctrine of nonresistance. It is clear from each of the examples he uses in his teaching on this question in the Sermon on the Mount [2] that it is individual action within the organized state that he has in mind; not the action of the organized state itself. The problem becomes entirely different when it is collective action and the prevention of evil to persons other than oneself that have to be considered.

Jesus did not present any theory of the state. We have from him only one injunction concerning it. "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's." [3] This recognizes the validity of the primary functions of the state without discussing the questions as to how these should be exercised and how the state should be organized. The Christian ethic sets the goal to be aimed at—an equal concern for the welfare of all—but leaves the method to be worked out by the Christian as best he can, in so far as he has power and responsibility within the state. In this situation the broad outlines of his duty, but only those, are reasonably clear.

[2] See Matt. 5:38–48.
[3] See Matt. 22:21.

First, he must do his best to insure that the state shall perform its function. Second, he must advocate the most ideal method of performing that function, remembering that no method is ideal unless it is practicable, and that no method is practicable unless the necessary collective support for it can be obtained.

Third, he must play his part in the performance of the function of the state by unideal methods, if such are chosen, unless he is convinced that his cooperation in the use of the unideal methods involves a breach of the moral law at least as serious as is involved in his refusal to do his duty to the state. If he is convinced that this is the case, then he must try to weigh the balance of good and evil involved in the alternatives open to him. The question then is not which action is right in principle, for he is faced with a conflict of principle. Nor is it a question of which course of action would be best if everybody concerned were to act in the same way, for everybody will not act in the same way; the problem is raised by the fact that sinners are using sinful methods to prevent the sins of other sinners, and it cannot be solved by asking what should be done if one side or the other were not sinful. The question is one which has to be answered by an estimation of the particular consequences to be expected from the particular situation: considering the consequences to all concerned, will the balance of evil over good be less if the individual refuses to do his duty to the state by cooperating in performance of its function by the means chosen, or will it be less if he cooperates in the performance of the function of the state by these evil means it has chosen?

Fourthly, if the state abuses its power by doing something wrong that is not a part of its proper function, such as an act of aggression against another state, then there is, clearly, no duty to cooperate, but rather a duty to oppose

such action. Unfortunately, international affairs are often so tangled, with both sides being at fault, that it is not clear who is the aggressor; and in such cases the Christian can only do his best with the evidence at hand to decide which state has been most to blame, and act accordingly. If he decides that his own state is the aggressor, however, his problem still is not clear. He has no duty to cooperate in the aggression, but he is probably helpless to stop it and finds it almost impossible to avoid aiding the aggression in some way. Even if not impressed into the army, he must pay taxes which are used in part for the war, and any useful work he does for the community helps to maintain that morale at home which is essential to the prosecution of a war. It is arbitrary for the conscientious objector to a war (whether or not he believes his own nation the aggressor) to draw the line simply at refusal to bear arms. He may help the army of his country less by bearing arms without a will to fight than by working as a street cleaner and paying taxes at home. The Christian convinced that his country is an aggressor must, therefore, consider first whether the greater good would be served by the victory or defeat of his country. Then he must, to the best of his ability and courage, work for its victory or defeat accordingly.

The Right of Property

The institution of property appears as in its essential nature contrary to the law of love. The impulse of love is to give, to share gladly with others. The essence of the idea of property is the claim to a right to exclude others from the use of something. This exclusion, however, is necessary in order that human need may function as a requirement calling for human endeavor. Just as it is a part of the discipline of life that nature does not supply all the

needs of man without his labor, thought, and care, so society must cooperate in that discipline by withholding the products of labor, thought, and care from those who can but will not participate in it. This means that those who produce goods must be recognized as having the right to enjoy their use to the exclusion of others. Charity is rightly exercised toward those unable to produce or earn the goods they need, but not without discrimination toward those who do not put forward their share of work in production and their share of forethought and care in the preservation and use of goods. The apparently ungenerous and exclusive aspect of the institution of property is thus not merely a concession to human selfishness; it is an essential feature of the disciplinary function of the environment.

An excellent illustration of this fundamental function of the institution of property was given me by the Protector of Aborigines in the state of South Australia, a civil servant with many years of experience with aborigines in various stages of development from nomadic life to complete assimilation into civilization. The nomadic aboriginal has very little property, and such as he has is almost completely the communal possession of the small nomadic group. Everybody helps everybody else in the making of the few weapons, tools, baskets, shelter, and adornments the group uses, and these are passed around for all to share. The maker of an article may claim a right to first use, but he must allow others to take turns. The ethical insistence is upon the right of all in the group to share, and the duty of all to cooperate in hunting, finding, and making the things needed and enjoyed. If one member of the group performs labor for the white man and receives goods in pay he is expected to share these with his little community. The unexpressed principle of social organization is that of

true communism: "From each according to his ability; to each according to his need."

This custom and spirit is carried over into the civilized conditions of life established on an aboriginal reservation. Here the minimal needs of life can be met by the able-bodied with a small amount of labor. The needs of the aged, indigent and orphan are met by government charity. The people are urged to raise their standard of living by engaging in regular labor which enables them to buy many of the much-desired comforts and luxuries of civilization—handsome clothes, food luxuries, musical instruments, household furniture, horses, and carts, even an old car. Those who attempt to do so are constantly discouraged, however, by the social demand that the use of all such articles shall be shared by any and every member of the community. To assert the right of the owner to exclusive, or nearly exclusive, use is deplored by the community as shameful and mean. Few are careful in the manner in which they use another's property and the owner often finds himself excluded from use of his own by the borrowing rights of his neighbors. The result is the discouragement of industry, thrift, and the care of durable goods. The individual who earns extra money by a spurt of industry is thus encouraged to spend it in brief enjoyments before everyone else puts in his claim. The standard of living remains much lower than it could be because of the discouragement of the able and industrious and the encouragement of the idle and careless.

These considerations constitute the justification of the essential principle of property—the right of the producer of material goods to exclusive use of that which he produces. This right is, of course, hedged by and subject to the limitations of all his duties, including the duty of stewardship, i.e., the use of his possessions for the greatest

good of all concerned. Such stewardship includes charity to those in need, personal frugality, productive use, fair exchange, and adequate reward for services, but it also includes the exercise of the right of exclusion in such way as to maintain the social discipline for which the institution of property exists.

The institution of property as it has developed in our contemporary society, however, is far removed from this elementary but limited right of the producer to exclusive use of the rewards of his labor, and its effects are far from securing the wholesome social discipline created in the proper exercise of that right. The proper social discipline of property is secured only if it is possible to obtain property only by output of socially useful labor (of hand or brain) and if the material rewards are roughly proportionate to the individual effort and its productive result. For the institution to be most effective ethically these conditions should apply to all able to do productive work. The existence of private fortunes which enable individuals to live luxuriously without productive work is as bad, from the standpoint of social discipline, as if such largesse were handed out to favored individuals by the state. In the teaching of Jesus it is clear that possession of such riches is regarded as a spiritual danger. This is the meaning of the advice to the rich young ruler [4] and the well-known hyperbole concerning the camel and the needle's eye.[5]

In our modern society vast masses of goods must be used in the complex processes of mechanical production, over and above the consumer's goods possessed as the reward of productive work. Under capitalism this mass of goods is privately owned, and that ownership imposes a heavy ethical burden of stewardship, with great spiritual dangers, upon

[4] Matt. 19:21.
[5] Matt. 19:24.

the shoulders of a limited number of individuals. Some of them recognize this burden for what it is and administer it well. All too many accept it, or eagerly grasp it, as a privilege giving them power and luxury, without proper appreciation of its responsibilities. The corrupting effects of power and the struggle for power are all too clearly manifest. The benefits due to the fact that under this system the management of these vast productive resources tends to pass into the hands most capable of effectively administering them are also clear. The alternative is some form of public ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. This, in its communist form, has only enhanced the concentration of power in the hands of the few. In the form of democratic socialism it has had limited trial with varying degrees of success. Whether this method could be extended without loss of productive capacity, or with improvement in it, and whether the ethical benefits from the diminution of private power would be offset, or more than offset, by an increase in public corruption, are questions which can only be answered after long-continued experimentation.

In the present situation, and under any conceivable system of economic organization, the individual Christian must find himself facing the necessity of adjusting his conduct to conditions created by the fact that he is a part of a complex of social institutions, that his only effective action must have the cooperation of others in collective action. He cannot always do what he believes to be best, because he cannot win the necessary cooperation. He, therefore, has to agree, very often, to cooperate in executing a policy he believes to be less than the best. Sometimes he finds an actual conflict between his duty to the public, to his workmates, to his family and to his employer. In such cases, where he cannot avoid committing a wrong

against someone, he must consider whether the one action or the other would involve a clear breach of the moral law. That, as we have seen, is to be avoided if possible. If he can by no choice avoid such wrong, then he must choose the lesser evil and, in doing so, may conscientiously claim that he acts aright.

The Uses of Legislation

In a democratic state the Christian citizen participates as a maker of law. This is a position for which none of the more specific ethical teaching of Christ prepares him, because that teaching was not addressed to those in such a position. He must therefore consider his duty solely in the light of the general principle embodied in the law of universal and impartial love. The state then comes to be viewed as Abraham Lincoln envisioned it. "The legitimate object of government is 'to do for the people what needs to be done, but which they cannot, by individual effort, do at all, or do so well, for themselves.' "[6] At the same time, he must remember that there is an inherent evil involved in every action of the state, namely, the use of force, so that if an equal good can be achieved by individual action or voluntary association the total result is better. The force of the state should not be used unless the results achieved have such distinct advantages as to offset the evil involved in using force.

This negative condition carries with it a general implication regarding the limitation of the function of criminal law. The function of criminal law is not to prescribe and enforce the whole moral duty of man, but to prescribe and enforce the minimum part of that duty which is essential to the existence of an orderly society in which individuals

[6] J. G. Nicolay and J. Hay (eds.), *The Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1902), Vol. I, p. 178.

will be secure in their essential rights. This consideration is particularly relevant to such problems as the laws of marriage and divorce. The moral ideal is to choose either a life-long monogamous marriage or voluntary celibacy. However, it is not the function of the state to seek to enforce this ideal by law. The state must consider only what standard of conduct in these matters is both enforceable and necessary to secure the essential rights of citizens in an orderly society.

Beyond the negative duties of the state concerned with criminal law there are, however, many functions of a positive character which need to be performed, and for which the state is undoubtedly the best instrument since it is the only instrument that can insure that each person shall undertake his appropriate share in the performance of these socially useful functions, whether by payment of taxes or actual services. These obligations of the state are considered and spelled out in detail in the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights. They constitute those services which the citizen of a civilized society has a right to expect from the civil organization of which he is a part. His right, in this case, is based upon his need and the moral duty of men to cooperate with one another to see that, as far as possible, every individual has the opportunity to satisfy his essential needs as a member of civilized society. Clearly, if society does not fulfill this obligation to its members, it is inviting them to use illegal means to fulfill such essential needs, or to strive by revolutionary means to change the social order so that they will be filled. A consideration of the essential needs of man will reveal what these rights are, and in so far as they are lacking in any society, it becomes the political duty of every Christian citizen to work to see that they are established and maintained. They may be briefly listed as follows.

Fundamental Human Rights

First, there are the rights of protection from unjustified violence of all kinds. This requires a state with a well organized police force, an intelligent method of dealing with criminals (aiming at their moral and social rehabilitation), and an incorruptible judiciary and administration. It must protect the citizen from assaults upon his good name and character as well as his person and property. It must protect him from the assaults of war as well as from those of criminals in his own community. Protection from military aggression requires not merely national strength in a world of constant threats of war but the organization of the world for peace. In a world which, like the present one, refuses to be adequately organized for peace, a combination of the several methods of securing peace and protection is inevitable. It will involve the maintenance and development of international organization as far as possible, the pursuit of friendly, helpful, and peaceful policies in relations with other nations, the maintenance of armed strength, and combination with other nations of peaceful intention for mutual protection. It is to a combination of policies of this kind that the world owes all the peace that it has ever had, but their periodic breakdown shows the necessity of striving toward a better way.

Second, there is the right to an opportunity to earn a living. This requires the organization of the economic system, not merely to protect the individual in the possession of his property, but to secure to every individual adequate and constant access to the means of production, or a market in which he can sell his services for adequate reward. Under the capitalist system, the means of production are owned and controlled by a limited number of individuals. Such private ownership is justified only so long as it proves

more productive than its alternatives and inflicts no injustices that counterbalance its advantages. It certainly is sufficiently productive to provide adequately for the needs of all in a highly civilized society. Its effect, however, is that the great majority of people have access only to the means of production owned by others, selling their services for pay, and the owners cannot purchase those services unless they can sell the goods produced. In the present loose and competitive organization of the system, this results in large numbers being periodically deprived of the opportunity to earn a livelihood. The livelihood of these people at such times therefore becomes a moral charge upon the society which supports the system—supports it because it is believed to create greater surpluses for distribution than any alternative. It is clearly a moral obligation to use such part of this surplus as is necessary to create new avenues of employment for those intermittently displaced by the system.

To provide opportunity for adequately remunerated work to all able to work is, however, not the only obligation upon those responsible for an economic system. It must also be made to supply the needs of those unable to work —and their needs are not merely those of bare subsistence, but those of self-respecting persons participating as fully as possible in the life of the community. This includes the care of the aged, sick, and afflicted, of widows with children, and of children who, for various reasons, are not adequately cared for by their parents. It would be well if everyone in the community could receive an income adequate to enable him to provide for all these things himself by means of savings and insurance. Yet even the American economy cannot at present, apparently, provide such large incomes for all as would make this possible; much less can less fortunate countries. Further, we are unable to guarantee

that such provision as is made will not be largely dissipated by inflation or other economic losses. And many do not have the knowledge, skill, character, and length of time in remunerative employment to achieve these ends out of a modest income, even if their modest income were otherwise sufficient to enable them to do it. It seems, therefore, that the capitalistic economic system cannot avoid the moral responsibility of making provision for these needs. The Scandinavian countries and several countries of the British Commonwealth have already gone far with such measures. There seems to be no way in which it can be done except by action of the state in its powers to tax and direct economic activity, but the measures required are quite distinct from the socialistic program which envisions public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange. The provisions of the so-called "welfare state" are not socialism in the proper meaning of the term, but simply capitalism organized with a conscience.

A further group of rights which the state must guarantee, as far as possible, to its citizens are those of the familiar freedoms. These include freedom in choice of employer and employment, freedom to marry and raise a family, freedom of speech and assembly and of religion and conscience, and the political freedoms involved in basic political rights and equality before the law. These are, fortunately, so well established in democratic countries that there is not much need for improvement, but we cannot rest content until they are completely secure to all in our own community and also extended to every country in the world.

The final concern which completes the basic needs of personality which a civilized community should insure to its citizens is that of education. Education means the opportunity to enter into the cultural heritage of one's people and to develop one's talents of mind and body to the full. We

have succeeded fairly well, in most civilized countries, in giving to the average citizen the education he needs. We are doing a good deal for the child who is, in various ways, below the average. But we still fall far short of doing all we can to develop the full measure of ability of those above average. The opportunities for higher education are still far too much limited by the economic status of the family into which the gifted child is born. This is a social waste which society, out of enlightened self-interest, should prevent. It is also a social injustice to the child and youth for which the conscience of the community should demand a remedy.

Material Welfare and Spiritual Needs

This brief review of the status of our society relative to human rights reveals ample scope for moral endeavor. Indeed, it constitutes a clarion call to the Christian conscience for devoted service. In responding to that call, however, there is a danger that something even more essential than these social concerns should be forgotten. We have been speaking of the needs for collective action, but we must not forget that sound collective action can proceed only from a society in which the great majority are spiritually sound as individuals. The evils of the social system must be remedied because they are evils, and because they are destructive of the moral life of individuals. But a social organization which met only man's material and intellectual needs would not be sufficient for the spiritual life. It must also include the activities which inculcate a sound religion. Neither is it possible to do much to improve the social organization without the impulse of a wholesome religion in the life of the community. The democratic process becomes a tussle of rival pressure groups, with little respect for the weak and unorganized, unless society is imbued with a sense of justice

and the rival groups can find leaders inspired by a religious devotion to the ideal of the law of love.

There is need for men of religious devotion and Christian ideals in the places of social leadership concerned with the shaping of the economic and political orders. There is still more need for such men in the life of the church. The collapse of a great part of European civilization may well be attributed to the failure of its churches. The national churches lost their influence among the working classes because they became authoritarian systems supporting the inequities of the social structure; and this made way for communism. They lost influence among the highly educated classes because their authoritarianism preserved an irrational theology; and this made room for fascism. The result was that European civilization lacked the spiritual resources to direct the social changes required by the growth of the industrial system. Only the very small countries, where, by reason of their smallness, political organization is simpler, retained any stability. In England and America the social system has had stability enough, thus far, to resist communism and fascism, because the nineteenth-century spiritual revival among their working classes still retains its strength, and because freer types of religious thought have largely retained the respect of the highly educated classes.

The spiritual crisis of our day calls, therefore, for religious leadership of men who can manifest the spirit of Christ. He was no mere teacher and preacher of a tradition. And, deep as his sympathy with human suffering was, he did not devote himself primarily to the service of man's material needs. He saw the devastating influences of deadening formalism, legalism, traditional theological interpretations, and the spiritual pride of Phariseeism upon the religious life of his day. He thought his way through the tangle of magic and superstition to discover the truth and spiritual

power of the simple principles of love to God and man. He waited long for the call to preach, maturing his own insight. It came to him after he had listened to the preaching of John and endorsed that bold new message by submitting to John's baptism. It assured him that he was no unworthy heretic because his mind had rejected so much of the teaching of the authorities: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." [7] He went forth into the desert to commune with the Spirit of God and to pray. He hungered. He wondered in his physical distress whether he might not better give himself to the service of man's physical need. If the kingdom of God meant good government, it might turn the stony desert into a source of bread. Perhaps he saw that the other way might well lead to a Calvary. But he also saw what was man's deeper need—the need of a truth which he had been led to understand and which he must give to the world, though he die for it. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." [8]

[7] Matt. 3:17.
[8] Matt. 4:4.

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